BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

THE LIFE OF MAHATMA GANDHI

Louis Fischer

PART II

GENERAL EDITORS

K. M. MUNSHI

N. CHANDRASEKHARA AIYER

347
V

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY

Reprinted by the kind permission of the Author

First Published by Jonathan Cape in London in 1951

Printed in India

Price : Inland Rs. 1-12-0
Foreign Rs. 2-0-0

...TED IN INDIA BY P. H. RAMAN AT THE ASSOCIATED ADVERTISE... ...., 505, ARTHUR ROAD, TARDEO, BOMBAY 7, AND PUBLISHED B... ...VE, HON. REGISTRAR AND ASST. DIRECTOR, BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY 7.

What Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

1. Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharata and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2. Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Shishya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher,

(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharata and Bharatiya Vidya.

a54-035092
FIS

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha, and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form or attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world.

GRAMASEVAKS TRAINING CENTRE
41
16 APR 1955
T. KALLUPATTI
604

G.L. 77

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

In March 1951, I organised the Book University of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Its object is to produce books in a uniform get-up and at cheap price covering the best literature in the world and in particular the literature which stands for India and the fundamentals for which Indian culture stands.

As a first step, it has been decided to publish in English 100 books selected by the General Editors, out of which 50 will be taken on hand immediately. The books will be approximately of 200 to 250 pages, priced at Rs. 1-12-0 per copy.

It is also the intention to publish these and other books also in eight other Indian languages, viz. (1) Hindi, (2) Bengali, (3) Gujarati, (4) Marathi, (5) Tamil, (6) Telugu, (7) Kannada and (8) Malayalam. This common pool of literature will enable the readers to appreciate world currents as also currents in our own Indian literature which, though differing in languages, have a common technique and urge.

This scheme involving the publication of 900 volumes requires an all-India organisation as also ample resources. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to plan and organise it.

The Bhavan by its objective stands for the reintegration of Indian culture in the light of modern needs and a resuscitation of its fundamental values, viz.:

(a) the dignity of Man implying the imperativeness of social conditions conducive to his freedom so that he may evolve on the lines of his own temperament and capabilities;

(b) harmony of individual efforts and social relations within the framework of th

(c) urge for the creative art of life, by which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of the Divine, and see Him in all and all in Him.

Fittingly, the Book University's first book is the *Mahabharata,* summarised by no less a person than C. Rajagopalachari, one of the greatest of living Indians; the second is on the *Gita* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed that "What is not in it is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries we can say the same thing. Who knows it not, knows not life, its beauty, its trials, its tragedy and its grandeur.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic. It is also a romance, a tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine, a whole literature, a whole code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations and of speculative thought, with its core of the *Gita,* the noblest of scriptures and the grandest saga working up to the Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

The literature of India, ancient and modern, through all its languages, will also be brought into a common pool easily accessible to all. Books in other languages which may illustrate these principles will also be included. The world, in all its sordidity, was, I felt, too much around us. Nothing will lift, inspire and uplift as beauty and aspiration learnt through books.

I thank all who have helped and worked to make this branch of Bhavan's activity successful.

QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI:
3rd October 1951.

K. M. MUNSHI

GL 93
GL 77

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	PROLOGUE	1
II	DRAMA AT THE SEASHORE	14
III	PARLEYS WITH THE REBEL	30
IV	ON THE WAY HOME	50
V	CLIMAX	59
VI	WITHOUT POLITICS	91
VII	DESCENT INTO WAR	116
VIII	WINSTON S. CHURCHILL *versus* MOHANDAS K. GANDHI	127
IX	MY WEEK WITH GANDHI	145
X	WILL-POWER	167
XI	JINNAH AND GANDHI	187
XII	ON THE EVE OF INDEPENDENCE	198
XIII	INDIA IN SUSPENSE	206
XIV	GANDHI REVISITED	216
XV	PILGRIM'S PROGRESS	245
XVI	ASIA'S MESSAGE TO THE WEST	264
XVII	TRAGIC VICTORY	277
XVIII	GANDHI HOES HIS GARDEN	288
XIX	THE FUTURE OF INDIA	302
XX	THE LAST FAST	307
XXI	THE LAST ACT	323

13

CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE

GANDHI moved into battle very slowly. Unlike most rebels he did not get ammunition from his adversary. The British merely provided him with an opportunity to use his special, self-made weapons: civil disobedience.

The savage massacre of policemen in Chauri Chaura in February 1922, by a Congress mob, had induced Gandhi to suspend civil disobedience in the country of Bardoli. But he did not forget. He waited six years, and on February 12th, 1928, he gave the signal for Satyagraha in the same place: Bardoli.

Gandhi did not conduct it himself. He watched from afar, wrote lengthy articles about it, and supplied the general direction and inspiration. The actual leader was Vallabhbhai Patel, assisted by a Moslem named Abbas Tyebji.

In 1915, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, a prosperous Ahmedabad lawyer, was playing bridge in his club when Gandhi entered. Patel looked at the visitor with a side glance of his heavy-lidded eyes, smiled under his thick moustache at the little man with the big, bulbous, loose turban and the long Kathiawar coat with the sleeves rolled up, and turned back to his cards. He had heard of Gandhi's South African exploits but was not impressed by this first view.

A week later, however, he dropped in at a conference on peasant taxation convened by Gandhi and stayed to admire the new-comer's logic. Patel had a precise, scientific, steel-trap mind. In later years, his clean-shaven pouchy face, his round, nut-brown bald head, and his broad body wrapped down to the knees in white khadi gave him the appearance of a classic Roman senator. If he had any

sentiments, he hid them successfully. He became the 'Jim Farley', as Americans called him, of the Congress party, the machine 'box' who remembered everybody's name and navigated with supreme confidence among the numerous jutting reefs of Indian politics.

Gandhi won Patel's loyalty by the common sense of his position: to win freedom you needed peasant backing, for India was more than 80 per cent. peasant. To win peasant backing you had to speak the peasant's language, dress like him, and know his economic needs.

In 1928 Patel was mayor of Ahmedabad. At Gandhi's suggestion, he left the post and went to Bardoli, in Bombay province, to guide the 87,000 peasants in a peaceful revolt against a 22 per cent. increase in taxes decreed by the British government.

The villagers, responding to Patel's leadership, refused to pay taxes. The collector seized their water buffaloes which worked and gave milk. Cultivators were driven off their farms. Kitchens were invaded and pots and pans confiscated for delinquency. Carts and horses were also taken. The peasants remained non-violent.

'At the rate the forfeitures are being served,' Gandhi observed in *Young India*, 'practically the whole of the country of Bardoli should soon be in the government's possession, and they can pay themselves a thousand times over for their precious assessments. The people of Bardoli, if they are brave, will be none the worse for dispossession. They will have lost their possessions but kept what must be the dearest of all to good men and women—their honour. Those who have stout hearts and hands need never fear loss of belongings.'

Apparently, the Mahatma thought every hungry peasant was a Gandhi. Strangely enough, the judgment did not

err. A spark of Gandhism lifted the peasantry into a mood of sacrifice.

Months passed. Bardoli stood its ground. Hundreds were arrested. The Government was accused of 'lawlessness'; no one called it terror, for no one was terrorized.

India began to take notice. Voluntary contributions flowed in for the maintenance of the struggle.

Government officials drove through the countryside in motor-cars. 'Why not barricade the roads,' some peasants whispered to Sardar Patel, 'or place spikes on them to burst the tyres of the officials' cars and give a "non-violent" shake-up to some fellow who has made himself a veritable nightmare to the people?'

'No,' Patel admonished, 'your fight is not for a few hundred thousand rupees, but for a principle . . . You are fighting for self-respect which ultimately leads to Swaraj.'

The Government undertook to denude whole villages of moveable property. The peasants barricaded themselves in their huts with their animals. The collectors then made off with carts. 'Pull your carts to pieces,' the Sardar ordered. 'Keep the body in one place and the wheels in another. Bury the shaft.'

The Government stated in a public announcement that some seized land had been sold to new occupants and that all farms in Bardoli would be auctioned if taxes remained unpaid. Vallabhbhai Patel's elder brother Vithalbhai, president of the national Legislative Assembly, wrote to the Viceroy with the charge that 'the measures adopted have crossed in several instances the bounds of law, order and decency'. Gandhi hailed the letter as breaking 'that unhealthy and slavish tradition' of neutrality when the people defied the Government.

At the instance of Gandhi, India celebrated a hartal, or cessation of work and business, on June 12th, in honour of

Bardoli. Huge sums were thrust upon Sardar Patel by Indians at home and abroad.

Gandhi went on a brief visit to Bardoli. Processions greeted him everywhere.

Indians of national importance, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the great constitutional lawyer, K. M. Munshi, a member of the Legislative Council of Bombay, and others expressed sympathy with the Bardoli resisters and demanded that justice be done by the Government. On July 13th, with the Satyagraha movement at its height, the Governor of the province of Bombay went to Simla to consult Lord Irwin. He returned five days later and summoned Vallabhbhai Patel, Abbas Tyebji and four other leading Satyagrahis to a conference. Negotiation is always welcome to the civil resister; it may lead to compromise. No compromise on Bardoli was possible, however, and on July 23rd, Sir Leslie Wilson, opening the session of the Bombay Legislative Council, declared the issue was 'whether the writ of his Majesty the King-Emperor is to run in a portion of His Majesty's dominions'.

The press in England awoke to the Bardoli revolt. Questions were asked in the House of Commons where Lord Winterton was firmly in favour of 'enforcsing compliance with law and crushing the movement . . .' The Satyagrahis and Patel ignored this 'sabre rattling'.

From all over India, Gandhi was urged to start civil disobedience in other provinces. He counselled patience. 'The time has not yet come for even limited sympathetic Satyagraha. Bardoli has still to prove its mettle. If it can stand the last heat and if the Government go to the farthest limit, nothing I or Vallabhbhai can do will stop the spread of Satyagraha or limit the issue . . . The limit will then be prescribed by the capacity of India as a whole

for self-sacrifice and self-suffering.' Meanwhile, the people of Bardoli 'are safe in God's hands'.

The arrest of Patel was expected hourly. On August 2nd, accordingly, Gandhi moved to Bardoli. On August 6th, the Government capitulated. It promised to release all prisoners, return all confiscated land, return the confiscated animals or their equivalent, and, the essence, to cancel the rise in taxes. Patel promised that the peasants would pay their taxes at the old rates. Both sides kept the agreement.

Gandhi had shown Irwin and India that the weapon worked.

Would he use it on a vaster scale?

India was in turmoil. From February 3rd, 1928, when the Simon Commission landed at Bombay, India boycotted it. Gandhi's boycott was so complete that he never mentioned the commission. For him, it did not exist. But others demonstrated against it. At a huge anti-Simon meeting in Lahore, Lajpat Rai, the chief political figure of the Punjab, a man of sixty-four whom Gandhi called the 'Lion of the Punjab', was struck with a lathi or four-foot wooden staff swung by the policeman in a charge, and died soon afterwards. About the same time, Jawaharlal Nehru was beaten with lathis during an anti-Simon protest meeting in Lucknow. In December 1928, several weeks after Lajpat Rai's death, Assistant Police Superintendent Saunders of Lahore was assassinated. Gandhi branded the assassination 'a dastardly act'. Bhagat Singh, the suspected assassin, eluded arrest and quickly achieved the status of hero.

During the autumn of 1928, the Government moved against the growing labour organizations of India. Trade union leaders, and Socialists and Communists, were arrested

en masse. Labour was unhappy and anti-British for nationalist as well as class reasons.

In Bengal, always the heart of turbulence and of opposition to the Government as well as to the Congress leadership, Subhas Chandra Bose, a stormy petrel whose philosophy was, 'Give me blood and I promise you freedom', had won great popularity and a big, restive following.

Gandhi sensed the crisis atmosphere. The existing British system was, he said, 'an unmitigated evil'. One word from him and a thousand Bardolis would spring into action throughout India. But as a good field-commander, Gandhi was always careful to choose the right time and place for battle. He knew India's strength; he also knew its weakness, and the weaknesses of Congress. Perhaps, if he was patient, the battle could be avioded; even a non-violent contest should not be undertaken before every possibility of averting it had been exhausted.

In this mood of uncertainty, Gandhi approached the annual Congress session which met in Calcutta in December 1928. En route to the meeting, friends put some searching and significant questions to him when the train stopped at Nagpur.

'What would be your attitude towards a political war of independence?' they asked.

'I would decline to take part in it,' Gandhi answered.

'Then you would not support a national militia?'

'I would support the formation of a national militia under Swaraj,' Gandhi said, 'if only because I realize that people cannot be made non-violent by compulsion. Today I am teaching the people how to meet a national crisis by non-violent means.'

The Congress session demanded action. But Gandhi had an eye for organization and a nose for reality. Congress talked war. Was it an effective army? Gandhi wanted

Congress 'overhauled'. 'The delegates to the Congress', he wrote, 'are mostly self-appointed . . . As at present constituted, the Congress is unable to put forth real united and unbreakable resistance.'

The Congress, however, would not be gainsaid. Caution was not on its agenda. Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru, leading the young men, wanted a declaration of immediate independence to be followed, implicitly, by a war of independence. Gandhi suggested a two years' warning to the British. Under pressure, he finally cut it down to one year. If by December 31st, 1929, India had not achieved freedom under Dominion Status, 'I must declare myself an Independence-walla.'

'I have burnt my boats,' Gandhi announced.

The year 1929 would be crucial and decisive.

As preparation for 1930, Gandhi toured India in 1929. He no longer allowed himself to be cooped up in first or second class, however. He travelled third again and found that the passengers were just as slovenly about personal sanitation as they were five years before.

While touring in the west-of-India province of Sindh, in February, Gandhi was summoned to New Delhi to accept the chairmanship of the Congress Committee for the Boycott of Foreign Cloth. He did not believe in boycotting British books or surgical instruments, etc. Nor would he countenance a boycott of British cloth only. Imported textiles from any country must be boycotted in favour, not of Indian mill products, but of khadi. He regarded the universal use of khadi as a prime requisite for the battle of 1930. Indians would go into that struggle wearing uniforms of homespun.

During his days in Delhi, Gandhi went to a tea party, and it became the subject of much rumour. The party was given by Speaker Patel of the Legislative Assembly,

and among the guests were Gandhi, Lord Irwin, Jinnah, Motilal Nehru, Pandit Malaviya, the Maharaja of Bikaner and the Maharaja of Kashmir. Surely, press and politicians speculated, the tea party was arranged to initiate conversations between Indians and Englishmen with a view to avoiding the 1930 clash. Speculation became so lush that Gandhi honoured the afternoon party with an inimitable paragraph in *Young India.* Gandhi admitted that Patel, a partisan of Swaraj, staged the tea party 'to break the ice as it were. But there cannot be much breaking of ice at a private, informal tea party. And in my opinion it cannot lead to any real advance or action unless both are ready. We know that we are not yet ready. England will never make any advance so as to satisfy India's aspirations till she is forced to it. British rule is no philanthropic job, it is a terribly earnest business proposition worked out from day to day with deadly precision. The coating of benevolence that is periodically given to it merely prolongs the agony. Such occasional parties are therefore good only to the extent of showing that the bringing together of parties will be easy enough when both are ready for business. Meanwhile let the reader rest satisfied with the assurance that no political significance attaches to the event. The party was one of Speaker Patel's creditable freaks.'

During the first four months of 1929, while Gandhi was lighting bonfires of foreign textiles in Calcutta and keeping longstanding speaking engagements in Burma, no longer a part of India, Irwin, according to his biographer, 'was largely absorbed with finding administrative remedies to meet the perils of political terrorism and industrial strife'. Alas, the remedy did not lie in administrative measures. It required statesmanship.

On April 8th, Bhagat Singh, the Sikh who killed Assist-

ant Police Superintendent Saunders in Lahore in December 1928, walked into the Legislative Assembly in New Delhi while the chamber was filled with its British and Indian members, tossed two bombs into their midst, and then began firing from an automatic pistol. The bombs exploded with a mighty impact but burst into large fragments instead of small splinters, and only one legislator was seriously wounded. Sir John Simon saw the outrage from the gallery. It was his last big impression of India; that month the Commission went home.

In May 1929, national elections in Britain gave Labour a minority in the House of Commons, but as the largest party it took office and Ramsay Macdonald became Prime Minister. In June, Irwin sailed for England to consult the new government and especially the new Secretary of State for India, Mr. Wedgwood Benn. Gandhi, who had said, 'You know, there is one thing in me, and that is that I love to see the bright side of things and not the seamy side,' hoped for a change that would obviate the expected showdown in 1930.

But though he looked for the silver lining, his head was never in the clouds; he kept his bare feet on the earth of India. In an unconditional condemnation of terrorist acts, Gandhi reiterated that the Government could stop them by 'conceding the national demand gracefully and in time. But that is hoping against hope. For the Government to do so would be a change of heart, not merely of policy. And there is nothing on the horizon to warrant the hope that any such change is imminent'.

He feared a bloody clash. 'If India attains what will be to me so-called freedom by violent means she will cease to be the country of my pride,' he wrote in *Young India* of May 9th, 1929. Prophetically, he pictured the ideal: freedom should come non-violently 'through a gentlemanly

understanding with Great Britain. But then,' he added, 'it will not be an imperialistic haughty Britain manoeuvring for world supremacy but a Britain humbly trying to serve the common end of humanity'.

That day was not yet.

With the fateful test of strength only a few months away, Gandhi continued to concern himself with the things that normally concerned him. In a leading article entitled 'A National Defect', the Mahatma returned to the question of cleanliness. He was travelling by car through the country and crossed the Krishna River. 'The car', he wrote, 'practically passed by hundreds of men and women evacuating themselves not many yards from the river bank. It is the stream in which people bathe and from which they drink. Here there was a breach of the code of decency and a criminal disregard of the most elementary laws of health. Add to this the economic waste of the precious manure, which they would save if these evacuations were made in a field and buried in the living surface of the earth and well mixed with loosened soil . . . Here is work for the municipalities.'

He worried about the expenses of his party while on tour. He asked for an accounting and found that 'these expenses do not amount to more than 5 per cent. of the collections . . . Having said this in defence of the expense, I must confess that even though the sums collected may be large, we cannot afford to fly from place to place and pay high motor charges'. (He never flew in his life. 'Fly' meant move fast in cars.)

Editorial offices and homes were being searched, presumably for seditious material. Individuals sent Gandhi reports of such measures. 'Let us thank the police,' he commented, 'that they were courteous.' The purpose of the raids, he declared, was 'to overawe and humiliate a

whole people. This studied humiliation is one of the chosen methods which the ruling race consider necessary in order that they—though less than one hundred thousand—may rule three hundred million people. It is a state of things we must strain every nerve to remedy. To command respect is the first step to Swaraj'.

This was Gandhi's refrain: dignity, discipline and restraint would bring Indians self-respect, therefore respect, therefore freedom.

January 1st, 1930, was not far off.

Irwin returned to India in October after conferences lasting several months with members of the Labour government, his predecessor Lord Reading, Lloyd George, Churchill, Stanley Baldwin, Sir John Simon and many others. The Viceroy found the situation in India 'bordering on a state of alarm'. Everything was ready for the great challenge of 1930.

On the last day of October 1929, accordingly, Irwin made 'his momentous statement' envisaging a Round Table Conference in which British government representatives would sit with delegates from British India and from the native states. (The idea of such a conference with Indian participants had been broached before the Simon Commission was appointed, but Irwin would not listen to it.) The statement declared that 'the natural issue of India's constitutional progress ... is the attainment of Dominion Status'.

By thus anticipating the recommendations of the Simon Commission, Irwin suggested in effect that its labours were vain and its life ended. Indians, to whom it had become a red flag, were expected to appreciate this aspect of the Viceroy's move.

A few days later, in Delhi, Gandhi met Dr. Ansari, Mrs. Annie Besant, Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru,

Pandit Malaviya, Srinivasa Sastri and others, and issued a 'Leaders' Manifesto'. Their response to the Viceroy's announcement was favourable, but, they said, steps should be taken to induce 'a calmer atmosphere', political prisoners should be released and the Indian National Congress should have the largest representation at the forthcoming Round Table Conference. They added a gloss: they understood the Viceroy to have said that the purpose of the conference was not to determine whether or when Dominion Status would be introduced but rather to draft a constitution for the Dominion.

The conciliatory attitude of Gandhi and the elder statesmen precipitated a storm of protest, especially from Jawaharlal Nehru, president-elect of the Congress party for 1930, and Subhas Chandra Bose. Undeterred, confident that a peaceful agreement with the British would be accepted by the nation, Gandhi and his colleagues continued their probings. They made an appointment with Lord Irwin for the afternoon of December 23rd.

That morning, Irwin returned by train from a tour of south India. At 7-40 a.m. the white cars of the Viceroy's train appeared out of the mist and approached New Delhi station. Three miles from the terminus, where the track is single, a bomb exploded under the train. Only one person was hurt, and Irwin did not know what happened until informed by his aide-de-camp.

A far deadlier bomb had been prepared for the Viceroy in Westminster. Lord Reading led the attack in the House of Lords, and the Tories and Liberals combined in the House of Commons to condemn Irwin's promise of a Round Table Conference and Dominion Status. Wedgwood Benn and other Labourites defended the Viceroy, but the result of the debate was to bring majority parliamentary pressure

to bear against any commitment in favour of Dominion Status.

When Jinnah, Gandhi, Sapru, Motilal Nehru and Vithalbhai Patel entered the Viceroy's office on the afternoon of December 23rd, Gandhi congratulated the Viceroy on his escape and then proceeded to detonate the long-fuse torpedo made in Parliament. The audience lasted for two and a half hours; Irwin and Gandhi did most of the talking.

Could his Excellency, Gandhi demanded, promise a Round Table Conference which would draft a constitution giving India full and immediate Dominion Status including the right to secede from the Empire?

Reflecting the Parliamentary debate, Irwin replied, in the words of his biographer, 'that he was unable to prejudge or commit the [Round Table] Conference at all to any particular line. . . .'

These events formed the overture to the historic annual Congress party convention which met, late in December, in Lahore, under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru who had celebrated his fortieth birthday the month before.

At the second of time when the year 1929 ended and 1930 was born, the Congress, with Gandhi as stage director, unfurled the flag of freedom and acclaimed a resolution in favour of unabridged independence and secession. 'Swaraj,' Gandhi declared, 'is now to mean complete independence.' The Congress convention instructed its members and friends to withdraw from all legislatures, and sanctioned civil disobedience including the non-payment of taxes. The All-India Congress Committee was authorized to decide when Satyagraha would commence but, as Gandhi said, 'I know that it is a duty devolving primarily on me.' Everyone realized that Gandhi would have to be the brain, heart

and directing hand of any civil disobedience movement, and it was therefore left to him to choose the hour, the place and the precise issue.

CHAPTER II

DRAMA AT THE SEASHORE

GANDHI was a reformer of individuals. Hence his concern for the means whereby India's liberation might be achieved. If the means corrupted the individual the loss would be greater than the gain.

Gandhi knew that the re-education of a nation was a slow process and he was not usually in a hurry unless prodded by events or by men reacting to those events. Left to himself, he would not have forced the issue of independence in 1930. But now the die was cast; Congress had decreed a campaign for independence. The leader therefore became an obedient soldier.

During the weeks after the stirring New Year's Eve independence ceremony, Gandhi searched for a form of civil disobedience that left no opening for violence.

Gandhi's monumental abhorrence of violence stemmed from the Jainist and Buddhist infusions into his Hinduism but, particularly, from his love of human beings. Every reformer, crusader and dictator avows his undying devotion to the anonymous mass; Gandhi had an apparently endless capacity to love the individual men, women and children who crowded his life. He gave them tenderness and affection; he remembered their personal needs and he enjoyed catering for their wants at the unnoticed expense of his limited time and energy. H. N. Brailsford, the humane British Socialist, explains this by 'the fact that

female tendencies were at least as strong in his mental make-up as male. They were evident, for example, in his love of children, in the pleasure he took in playing with them, and in the devotion he showed as a sick-nurse. His beloved spinning wheel has always been a woman's tool. And is not Satyagraha, the method of conquering by self-suffering, a woman's tactic?' Perhaps. But may be Brailsford is being unfair to men and too fair to the fair. Like Brailsford, everyone will interpret Gandhi's loving kindness according to his own experience. It wrapped the Mahatma's iron will and austerity in a downy softness; one touch of it and most Indians forgave his blunders, quirks and fads. It ruled out anything that could lead to violence. In the successful Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928, for instance, there was no violence, but there might have been. The peasants might have allowed themselves to be goaded into the use of force. The civil disobedience campaign of 1930, Gandhi felt, had to preclude such potentials, for if it got out of hand no one, not even he, could control it.

Rabindranath Tagore, for whom Gandhi had the deepest veneration, was in the neighbourhood of Sabarmati Ashram and came for a visit on January 18th. He inquired what Gandhi had in store for the country in 1930. 'I am furiously thinking night and day,' Gandhi replied, 'and I do not see any light coming out of the surrounding darkness.'

The situation made Gandhi apprehensive. 'There is a lot of violence in the air,' he said. The British government had altered the exchange rate of the rupee so that India might import more from Lancashire; the Indian middle class suffered. The Wall Street crash of October 1929, and the spreading world economic depression hit the Indian peasant. Working-class unrest was mounting for all these

reasons, and because of the Government's persecution of labour organizers. Again, as in 1919 to 1921, a number of young Indians saw an opportunity of striking a bloody blow for freedom.

Civil disobedience in these circumstances involved 'undoubted risks', but the only alternative was 'armed rebellion'. Gandhi's confidence remained unshaken.

For six weeks, Gandhi had been waiting to hear the 'Inner Voice'. This, as he interpreted it, had no Joan-of-Arc connotations. 'The "Inner Voice"', he wrote, 'may mean a message from God or from the Devil, for both are wrestling in the human breast. Acts determine the nature of the voice.'

Presently, Gandhi seemed to have heard the Voice, which could only mean that he had come to a decision, for the February 27th issue of *Young India* opened with an editorial by Gandhi entitled 'When I am Arrested', and then devoted considerable space to the iniquities of the salt tax. The next number of the magazine quoted the penal sections of the Salt Act. And on March 2nd, 1930, Gandhi sent a long letter to the Viceroy serving notice that civil disobedience would begin in nine days.

It was the strangest communication the head of a government ever received.

Dear Friend, Before embarking on Civil Disobedience and taking the risk I have dreaded to take all these years, I would fain approach you and find a way out.
My personal faith is absolutely clear. I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst, therefore, I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend harm to a single Englishman or to any

legitimate interest he may have in India. . . .And wh[illegible] regard the British rule as a curse?
It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinous expensive military and civil administration which the country can never afford.
It has reduced us politically to serfdom. It has sapped the foundations of our culture. And by the policy of cruel disarmament, it has degraded us spiritually. . . .
I fear . . . there never has been any intention of granting . . . Dominion Status to India in the immediate future. . .
It seems as clear as daylight that responsible British statesmen do not contemplate any alteration in British policy that might adversely affect Britain's commerce with India . . .
If nothing is done to end the process of exploitation India must be bled with an ever increasing speed. . . .
Let me put before you some of the salient points.
The terrific pressure of land revenue, which furnishes a large part of the total, must undergo considerable modification in an Independent India . . . the whole revenue system has to be so revised as to make the peasant's good its primary concern. But the British system seems to be designed to crush the very life out of him. Even the salt he must use to live is so taxed as to make the burden fall heaviest on him, if only because of the heartless impartiality of its incidence. The tax shows itself still more burdensome on the poor man when it is remembered that salt is the one thing he must eat more than the rich man . . . The drink and drug revenue, too, is derived from the poor. It saps the foundations both of their health and morals.
The iniquities sampled above are maintained in order to carry on a foreign administration, demonstrably the most expensive in the world. Take your own salary. It is over 21,000 rupees [about £1750] per month, besides many

other indirect additions . . . You are getting over 700 rupees a day against India's average income of less than two annas [twopence] per day. Thus you are getting much over five thousand times India's average income. The British Prime Minister is getting only ninety times Britain's average income. On bended knee, I ask you to ponder over this phenomenon. I have taken a personal illustration to drive home a painful truth. I have too great a regard for you as a man to wish to hurt your feelings. I know that you do not need the salary you get. Probably the whole of your salary goes for charity. But a system that provides for such an arrangement deserves to be summarily scrapped. What is true of the Viceregal salary is true generally of the whole administration . . . Nothing but organized non-violence can check the organized violence of the British government. . . .

This non-violence will be expressed through civil disobedience, for the moment confined to the inmates of the Satyagraha [Sabarmati] Ashram, but ultimately designed to cover all those who choose to join the movement. . . .

My ambition is no less than to convert the British people through non-violence, and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India. I do not seek to harm your people. I want to serve them even as I want to serve my own. . . . If the [Indian] people join me as I expect they will, the sufferings they will undergo, unless the British nation sooner retraces its steps, will be enough to melt the stoniest hearts.

The plan through Civil Disobedience will be to combat such evils as I have sampled out . . . I respectfully invite you to pave the way for the immediate removal of those evils, and thus open a way for a real conference between equals . . . But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and if my letter makes no appeal to your heart,

on the eleventh day of this month I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take, to disregard the provisions of the Salt Laws . . . It is, I know, open to you to frustrate my design by arresting me. I hope that there will be tens of thousands ready, in a disciplined manner, to take up the work after me. . . .

If you care to discuss matters with me, and if to that end you would like me to postpone publication of this letter, I shall gladly refrain on receipt of a telegram. . . .

This letter is not in any way intended as a threat but is a simple and sacred duty peremptory on a civil resister. Therefore I am having it specially delivered by a young English friend who believes in the Indian cause. . . .

I remain,

Your sincere friend,

M. K. Gandhi.

The messenger was Reginald Reynolds, a British Quaker who later wrote a book on beards. Clad in khadi and a sun helmet, he entered the Viceroy's house and delivered the letter to Irwin who had flown back from the polo matches at Meerut to receive it.

Irwin chose not to reply. His secretary sent a four-line acknowledgment saying, 'His Excellency . . . regrets to learn that you contemplate a course of action which is clearly bound to involve violation of the law and danger to the public peace.'

This law-and-order note, which disdained to deal with matters of justice and policy, caused Gandhi to say, 'On bended knee I asked for bread and I received stone instead.' Irwin refused to see Gandhi. Nor did he have him arrested. 'The government,' Gandhi declared, 'is puzzled and perplexed.' It was dangerous not to arrest the rebel, and dangerous to arrest him.

As March 11th neared, India bubbled with excitement and curiosity. Scores of foreign and domestic correspondents dogged Gandhi's footsteps in the ashram; what exactly would he do? Thousands surrounded the village and waited. The excitement spread abroad. Cables kept the Ahmedabad post office humming. 'God guard you,' the Reverend Dr. John Haynes Holmes wired from New York.

Gandhi felt it was the 'opportunity of a lifetime'.

On March 12th, prayers having been sung, Gandhi and seventy-eight male and female members of the ashram, whose identities were published in *Young India* for the benefit of the police, left Sabarmati for Dandi, due south of Ahmedabad. Gandhi leaned on a lacquered bamboo staff one inch thick and fifty-four inches long with an iron tip. Following winding dirt roads from village to village, he and his seventy-eight disciples walked two hundred miles in twenty-four days. 'We are marching in the name of God,' Gandhi said.

Peasants sprinkled the roads and strewed leaves on them. Every settlement in the line of march was festooned and decorated with India's national colours. From miles around, peasants gathered to kneel by the roadside as the pilgrims passed. Several times a day the marches halted for a meeting where the Mahatma and others exhorted the people to wear khadi, abjure alcohol and drugs, abandon child marriage, keep clean, live purely and — when the signal came — break the Salt Laws.

He had no trouble in walking. 'Less than twelve miles a day in two stages with not much luggage,' he said. 'Child's play!' Several became fatigued and footsore, and had to ride in a bullock cart. A horse was available for Gandhi throughout the march but he never used it. 'The modern generation is delicate, weak, and much pampered,'

Gandhi commented. He was sixty-one. He spun every day for an hour and kept a diary and required each ashramite to do likewise.

In the area traversed, over three hundred village headmen gave up their government posts. The inhabitants of a village would accompany Gandhi to the next village. Young men and women attached themselves to the marching column; when Gandhi reached the sea at Dandi on April 5th, his small ashram band had grown into a non-violent army several thousand strong.

The entire night of April 5th, the ashramites prayed, and early in the morning they accompanied Gandhi to the sea. He dipped into the water, returned to the beach, and there picked up some salt left by the waves. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, standing by his side, cried, 'Hail, Deliverer'. Gandhi had broken the British law which made it a punishable crime to possess salt not obtained from the British government salt monopoly. Gandhi, who had not used salt for six years, called it a 'nefarious monopoly'. Salt, he said, is as essential as air and water, and in India all the more essential to the hard-working, perspiring poor man and his beasts because of the tropical heat.

Had Gandhi gone by train or motor-car to make salt, the effect would have been considerable. But to walk for twenty-four days and rivet the attention of all India, to trek across a country-side saying, 'Watch, I am about to give a signal to the nation,' and then to pick up a pinch of salt in publicized defiance of the mighty Government and thus become a criminal, that required imagination, dignity and the sense of showmanship of a great artist. It appealed to the illiterate peasant and it appealed to a sophisticated critic and sometime fierce opponent of Gandhi's like Subhas Chandra Bose who compared the Salt March to 'Napoleon's march to Paris on his return from Elba.'

The act performed, Gandhi withdrew from the scene. India had its cue. Gandhi had communicated with it by lifting up some grains of salt.

The next act was an insurrection without arms. Every villager on India's long sea coast went to the beach or waded into the sea with a pan to make salt. The police began mass arrests. Ramdas, third son of Gandhi, with a large group of ashramites, was arrested. Pandit Malaviya and other moderate co-operators resigned from the Legislative Assembly. The police began to use violence. Civil resisters never resisted arrest; but they resisted the confiscation of the salt they had made, and Mahadev Desai reported cases where such Indians were beaten and bitten in the fingers by constables. Congress Volunteers openly sold contraband salt in cities. Many were arrested and sentenced to short prison terms. In Delhi, a meeting of fifteen thousand persons heard Pandit Malaviya appeal to the audience to boycott foreign cloth; he himself bought some illegal salt after his speech. The police raided the Congress party headquarters in Bombay where salt was being made in pans on the roof. A crowd of sixty thousand assembled. Hundreds were handcuffed or their arms fastened with ropes and led off to jail. In Ahmedabad, ten thousand people obtained illegal salt from Congress in the first week after the act at Dandi. They paid what they could; if they had no money they got it free. The salt lifted by Gandhi from the beach was sold to a Dr. Kanuga, the highest bidder, for 1600 rupees. Jawaharlal Nehru, the president of Congress, was arrested in Allahabad under the Salt Acts and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. The agitation and disobedience spread to the turbulent regions of the Maharashtra and Bengal. In Calcutta, the Mayor, J. M. Sengupta, read seditious literature aloud at a public meeting and urged non-wearing of foreign textiles.

He was put in prison for six months. Picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth shops commenced throughout India. Girls and ladies from aristocratic families and from families where purdah had been observed came out into the streets to demonstrate. Police became vindictive and kicked resisters in sensitive parts. Civil resistance began in the province of Bihar. Seventeen Bihar Satyagrahis, including resigned members of Legislative Councils, were sentenced to periods of from six months to two years in prison. A Swami who had lived in South Africa received two and a half years. Teachers, professors and students made salt at the sea and inland, and were marched to jails in batches. Kishorlal Mashruwala, a faithful disciple of Gandhi, and Jamnalal Bajaj, a rich friend of Gandhi's were sentenced to two years' imprisonment. In Karachi, the police fired on a demonstration; two young Volunteers were killed. 'Bihar has been denuded of almost all its leaders,' Mahadev Desai wrote, 'but the result has been the opening of many more salt centres.' Congress distributed literature explaining simple methods of producing salt. B. G. Kher and K. M. Munshi, leaders of the national Congress, were arrested in Bombay. Devadas Gandhi was sentenced to three months' imprisonment in Delhi. The salt movement and the arrests and imprisonments spread to Madras, the Punjab and the Carnatic (Karnatak). Many towns observed hartals when Congress leaders were arrested. At Patna, in Bihar, a mass of many thousands moved out of the city to march to a spot where salt would be made. The police blocked the highway. The crowd stayed and slept on the road and in the fields for forty hours. Rajendra Prasad, who was present and told the story, received orders from the police officer to disperse the crowd. He refused. The officer announced that he would charge with cavalry. The crowd did not move. As

the horses galloped forward, the men and women threw themselves flat on the ground. The horses stopped and did not trample them. Constables then proceeded to lift the demonstrators and place them in trucks for transportation to prison. Other demonstrators replaced them. Mahadev Desai was arrested for bringing in a load of salt. In villages, millions of peasants were preparing their own salt. The British pressed local officials to cope with the problem. The officials resigned. Vithalbhai Patel, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, resigned. A large group of prominent women appealed to Lord Irwin to prohibit the sale of intoxicating beverages. At Karachi, fifty thousand people watched as salt was made on the seashore. The crowd was so dense the policemen were surrounded and could make no arrests. At Peshawar, the key to the volatile north-west Frontier Province, an armoured car, in which the Deputy Police Commissioner was seated, first ran full-tilt into a crowd and then machine-gunned it, killing seventy and wounding about one hundred. In parts of Bengal, in the United Provinces and in Gujarat, peasants refused to pay rent and the land tax. The Government tried to place all nationalist newspapers under censorship, whereupon most of them voluntarily suspended publication. Congress provincial offices were sealed and their property and office paraphernalia confiscated. Rajagopalachari was arrested in Madras and given a nine months' sentence. The wild Afridi tribe, in the north-west frontier Tribal Area, attacked British patrols. In the city of Chittagong, Bengal, a band of violent revolutionists raided the arsenal to seize arms. Some were killed.

The Viceroy, says Irwin's biographer, 'had filled the jails with no less than sixty thousand political offenders'. Estimates ran as high as a hundred thousand. 'A mere recital

of the action taken by him during this time', the biography affirms, 'belies once for all the legend that he was a weak Viceroy. Those who were responsible for executing his orders testify that his religious convictions seemed to reinforce the very ruthlessness of his policy of suppression. . . .'

A month after Gandhi touched salt at the Dandi beach, India was seething in angry revolt. But, except at Chittagong, there was no Indian violence, and nowhere was there any Congress violence. Chauri Chaura in 1922 had taught India a lesson. Because they treasured the movement Gandhi had conjured into being, and lest he cancel it, they abstained from force.

May 4th, Gandhi's camp was at Karadi, a village near Dandi. He had gone to sleep on a cot under a shed beneath the branches of an old mango tree. Several disciples slept by his side. Elsewhere in the grove, other ashramites were in deep slumber. At 12-45 a.m., in the night of May 4th to 5th, heavy steps were heard. Thirty Indian policemen armed with rifles, pistols and lances, two Indian officers, and the British District Magistrate of Surat invaded the leafy compound. A party of armed constables entered Gandhi's shed and the English officer turned the flashlight on Gandhi's face. Gandhi awoke, looked about him, and said to the Magistrate, 'Do you want me?'

'Are you Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi?' the Magistrate asked for the sake of form.

Gandhi admitted it.

The officer said he had come to arrest him.

'Please give me time for my ablutions,' Gandhi said politely.

The Magistrate agreed.

While brushing his few teeth, Gandhi said, 'Mr. District

Magistrate, may I know under which charge I am arrested. Is it Section 124?'

'No, not under Section 124. I have got a written order.'

By this time, all the sleepers in the compound had crowded around the shed. 'Please, would you mind reading it to me?' Gandhi asked.

The Magistrate (reading): 'Whereas the Governor-in-Council views with alarm the activities of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, he directs that the said Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi should be placed under restraint under Regulation XXXV of 1827, and suffer imprisonment during the pleasure of the Government, and that he be immediately removed to the Yeravda Central Jail.'

At 1 a.m., Gandhi was still cleaning his teeth. The officer told him to hurry. Gandhi packed some necessities and papers in a small bag. Turning to the officer, he said, 'Please give me a few minutes more for prayer.'

The officer nodded in assent, and Gandhi requested Pandit Khare to recite a famous Hindu hymn. The ashramites sang. Gandhi lowered his head and prayed. Then he stepped to the side of the Magistrate who led him to the waiting vehicle.

There was no trial, no sentence and no fixed term of imprisonment. The arrest took place under an ordinance, passed before a British government existed in India, which regulated the relations between the East India Company and Indian potentates.

The prison authorities measured Gandhi and noted his height: five feet five inches. They also made sure to have his special identification marks in case they needed to find him again: a scar on the right thigh, a small mole on the lower right eyelid, and a scar about the size of a pea below the left elbow.

Gandhi loved it in jail. 'I have been quite happy and

making up for arrears in sleep,' he wrote Miss Madeleine Slade, a week after his imprisonment. He was treated extremely well; the prison goat was milked in his presence. On his day of silence he wrote a letter to the little children in the ashram.

Little birds, ordinary birds cannot fly without wings. With wings, of course, all can fly. But if you, without wings, will learn how to fly, then all your troubles will indeed be at an end. And I will teach you.

See, I have no wings, yet I come flying to you every day in thought. Look, here is little Vimala, here is Hari and here is Dharmakumar. And you can also come flying to me in thought. . . .

Tell me too who amongst you are not praying properly in Prabhubhai's evening prayer.

Send me a letter signed by all, and those who do not know how to sign may make a cross.

Bapu's blessings.

Just before his arrest, Gandhi had drafted a letter to the Viceroy announcing his intention, 'God willing', to raid the Dharasana Salt Works with some companions. God, apparently, was not willing, but the companions proceeded to effect the plan. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the poetess, led twenty-five hundred Volunteers to the site one hundred and fifty miles north of Bombay and, after morning prayers, warned them that they would be beaten 'but', she said, 'you must not resist; you must not even raise a hand to ward off a blow'.

Webb Miller, the well-known correspondent of the United Press who died in England during the second World War, was on the scene and described the proceedings. Manilal Gandhi moved forward at the head of the marchers and approached the great salt pans which were surrounded by

...hes and barbed-wire and guarded by four hundred Surat policemen under the command of six British officers. 'In complete silence the Gandhi men drew up and halted a hundred yards from the stockade. A picked column advanced from the crowd, waded the ditches, and approached the barbed-wire stockade.' The police officers ordered them to retreat. They continued to advance. 'Suddenly,' Webb Miller reported, 'at a word of command, scores of native policemen rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod lathis. Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like nine-pins. From where I stood I heard the sickening whack of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of marchers groaned and sucked in their breath in sympathetic pain at every blow. Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing with fractured skulls or broken shoulders . . . The survivors, without breaking ranks, silently and doggedly marched on until struck down.' When the first column was laid low, another advanced. 'Although everyone knew,' Webb Miller wrote, 'that within a few minutes he would be beaten down, perhaps killed, I could detect no signs of wavering or fear. They marched steadily, with heads up, without the encouragement of music or cheering or any possibility that they might escape serious injury or death. The police rushed out and methodically and mechanically beat down the second column. There was no fight, no struggle; the marchers simply walked forward till struck down.'

Another group of twenty-five advanced and sat down. 'The police', Webb Miller testifies, 'commenced savagely kicking the seated men in the abdomen and testicles.' Another column advanced and sat down. Enraged, the police dragged them by their arms and feet and threw them into

the ditches. 'One was dragged to a ditch where I stood,' Miller wrote, 'the splash of his body doused me with muddy water. Another policeman dragged a Gandhi man to the ditch, threw him in, and belaboured him over the head with his lathi. Hour after hour stretcher-bearers carried back a stream of inert, bleeding bodies.'

A British officer approached Mrs. Naidu, touched her arm, and said, 'Sarojini Naidu, you are under arrest.' She shook off his hand. 'I'll come,' she declared, 'but don't touch me.' Manilal was also arrested.

'By eleven [in the morning],' Webb Miller continued, 'the heat had reached 116 and the activities of the Gandhi volunteers subsided.' He went to the temporary hospital and counted three hundred and twenty injured, many of them still unconscious, others in agony from the body and head blows. Two men had died. The same scenes were repeated for several days.

India was now free. Technically, legally, nothing had changed. India was still a British colony. Tagore explained the difference. 'Those who live in England, far away from the East,' he told the *Manchester Guardian* of May 17th, 1930, 'have now got to realize that Europe has completely lost her former moral prestige in Asia. She is no longer regarded as the champion throughout the world of fair dealing and the exponent of high principle, but as the upholder of Western race supremacy and the exploiter of those outside her own borders.

'For Europe this is, in actual fact, a great moral defeat that has happened. Even though Asia is still physically weak and unable to protect herself from aggression where her vital interests are menaced, nevertheless she can now afford to look down on Europe where before she looked up.' He attributed the achievement in India to Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi did two things in 1930: he made the British people aware that they were cruelly subjugating India, and he gave Indians the conviction that they could, by lifting their heads and straightening their spines, lift the yoke from their shoulders. After that, it was inevitable that Britain should some day refuse to rule India and that India should some day refuse to be ruled.

The British beat the Indians with batons and rifle butts. The Indians neither cringed nor complained nor retreated. That made England powerless and India invincible.

CHAPTER III

PARLEYS WITH THE REBEL

MANY British Labour ministers and their supporters were champions of Indian independence. Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald could be faced with his own unequivocal statements in favour of India's freedom. It was embarrassing for Labour to keep Gandhi and tens of thousands of Indian nationalists in jail. To Lord Irwin, Gandhi's imprisonment was more than an embarrassment; it paralysed his administration. Revenues dropped steeply. Unrest mounted. When the news of Gandhi's arrest reached industrial Sholapur, in the Bombay Presidency or province, the population overpowered the police, raised the national flag, and declared themselves independent of British rule. In Peshawar, the police surrendered the city to the non-violent, religious 'Red Shirts', an organization led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the 'Frontier Gandhi'. The army appeared three days later and machine-gunned peaceful citizens. But a platoon of Garhwal Rifles, famous Hindu regiment of the British Army, mutinied, refused to

fire on Moslems, and were court-martialed and sentenced to ten to fourteen years' hard labour. On June 30th, Motilal Nehru was arrested. More than a hundred thousand Indians, and almost all Congress first-, second-, third- rank leaders were in prison.

The situation was politically intolerable for MacDonald and Irwin. Gandhi in jail was as much a nuisance as Gandhi on the march or at the beach or in the ashram.

Conscious of their dilemma and of the growing revolt, the authorities permitted George Slocombe, handsome, red-bearded correspondent of the London Labour paper, the *Daily Herald*, to interview Gandhi in prison, on May 19th and 20th, only two weeks after the Mahatma's arrest. Gandhi gave Slocombe the terms on which he would be ready to negotiate with the British government. In July, with the Viceroy's consent, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. M. R. Jayakar, leaders of the moderates, went to Gandhi's cell for parleys. Gandhi was glad to talk to them but said he could not reply to overtures before he consulted the Congress Working Committee. Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru, father and son, and Syed Mohamud, the acting secretary of Congress, were accordingly transported in a special train, with every comfort and courtesy, from their jail in the United Provinces to Gandhi's jail at Poona where Mrs. Naidu and Vallabhbhai Patel were also confined. Irwin willingly brought his prisoners together, but Working Committee members still at liberty were not allowed to participate in these prison conversations.

After two days' discussion (August 14th-15th), the leaders announced publicly that 'an unbridgeable gulf' separated them from the British position.

The first Round Table Conference opened in London on November 12th, 1930; Jinnah, the Maharaja of Bikaner,

Srinivasa Sastri and others were there. No Congress representative attended. The conference accomplished nothing. But the Labour government's conciliatory attitude was apparent throughout; indeed, at the closing session, on January 19th, 1931, Ramsay MacDonald expressed the hope that Congress would send delegates to the second Round Table Conference.

Irwin gladly took the hint—or the command—and unconditionally released Gandhi, the Nehrus, and more than twenty other Congress leaders on January 26th, Independence Day. In appreciation of this graceful gesture, Gandhi wrote a letter to the Viceroy asking for an interview. 'Face-saving' was an unintelligible concept to Gandhi. He did not believe in ending a relationship that could be mended, and since he had an undying faith in mending, he tried never to end a personal or political relationship.

The first meeting between Irwin and Gandhi began on February 17th, at 2-30 p.m., and lasted till 6-10 p.m. 'So the stage was set', writes Irwin's biographer, 'for the most dramatic personal encounter between a Viceroy and an Indian leader in the whole seething history of the British raj.'

It was more than dramatic; the mere fact of the encounter was historically decisive. Winston Churchill, always clear-eyed, saw this better than anyone. He was revolted by 'the nauseating and humiliating spectacle of this one-time Inner Temple lawyer, now seditious fakir, striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceroy's palace, there to negotiate and to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor'.

A fakir is an Indian mendicant monk.

Churchill realized that it was not an ordinary interview. Gandhi did not come, like most of the Viceroy's visitors, to

ask favours. He came as the leader of a nation to negotiate 'on equal terms' with the leader of another nation. The Salt March and its aftermath had proved that England could not rule India against or without Gandhi. The British Empire was at the mercy of the half-naked fakir, and Churchill did not like it. Churchill saw that Britain was conceding India's independence in principle while withholding it, for the time being, in practice.

The negotiations between Irwin and Gandhi took place in the Viceroy's new palace, designed by the gifted British architect Sir Edwin Lutyens. Rising suddenly, high, expensive and resplendent, out of the flat Delhi plain amidst the ruins of Mogul mosques and forts, it symbolized the towering might of the British raj. But almost the first act within its halls marked the beginning of the end of that power.

Gandhi and Irwin conferred again for three hours on February 18th, and for half an hour on the 19th. Meanwhile Irwin was cabling his superiors six thousand miles away in London, while Gandhi held long meetings with the Congress Working Committee members in New Delhi. (The great Motilal Nehru had died on February 6th.) Shuttling between the two parties, Sapru, Jayakar and Sastri strove to prevent a deadlock.

Once, during a conference, Irwin asked Gandhi whether he would have tea. 'Thank you,' said Gandhi, taking a paper bag out of a fold in his shawl, 'I will put some of this salt into my tea to remind us of the famous Boston Tea Party.' Both laughed.

Difficulties arose. There were no talks for seven days. On February 27th they were resumed. On March 1st, Gandhi came to Irwin at 2-30 p.m. The discussions continued till his dinner time, so Miss Slade had brought his dinner — forty dates and a pint of goat's milk — to the

palace and Gandhi ate it in the presence of the Viceroy. At 5-50 p.m. Gandhi left the Viceroy, but that same evening he walked, unescorted, from Dr. Ansari's house, where he was staying, to the palace, a distance of five miles, and remained closeted with Irwin till after midnight. 'Good night,' Irwin said to him as he departed to trudge home alone in the darkness. 'Good night, Mr. Gandhi, and my prayers go with you.' Gandhi reached home at 2 a.m. The Working Committee was waiting for him.

Finally, after further wrangling between the two men and between each of them and their colleagues, the Irwin-Gandhi Pact, or The Delhi Pact as Irwin's biographer calls it, was signed after breakfast on March 5th. The key word is 'Pact'. Two national statesmen had signed a pact, a treaty, an agreed text, every phrase and stipulation of which had been hammered out in tough bargaining. British spokesmen maintained that Irwin won the battle, and a good case could be made for the contention. But in the long-range terms in which the Mahatma thought, the equality that had been established, in principle, between India and England was more important than any practical concession which he might have wrung from the reluctant Empire. A politician would have sought more substance. Gandhi was satisfied with the essence: a basis for a new relationship.

For the millions, and for history, the thousands of words of the Pact with its many articles, headings and sub-headings which appeared in the official *Gazette of India Extraordinary* of March 5th, 1931, meant: civil disobedience would be called off, prisoners released, and salt manufacture permitted on the coast; Congress would attend the next Round Table Conference in London. Independence was not promised. Dominion Status was not promised.

In an address to American and Indian journalists that day, Gandhi paid a tribute to the Viceroy. 'I am aware,' he told the newsmen, 'that I must have, though quite unconsciously, given him cause for irritation. I must also have tried his patience, but I cannot recall an occasion when he allowed himself to be betrayed into irritation or impatience.' The settlement, Gandhi said, was 'provisional' and 'conditional'; a 'truce'. The goal remained: 'complete independence . . . India cannot be satisfied with anything less. . . . The Congress does not consider India to be a sickly child requiring nursing, outside help and other props'.

One has a feeling, in reviewing Gandhi's 1930 negotiations, that he viewed them at the time in the perspective of several decades later. What does the phraseology or even content of Article 2 matter now? Seventeen years after the Delhi Pact, India was an independent nation. What are seventeen years in the life of an old nation like India?

Subhas Chandra Bose, a critic of the Mahatma, watching the public reaction during a tour with Gandhi after the Pact was signed, wrote, 'I wonder if such a spontaneous ovation was ever given to a leader anywhere else.' And Bose admitted that Irwin, 'though a prominent member of the Conservative Party . . . had proved himself to be a well-wisher of India'. To Gandhi, who was often guided in politics by his responses to persons, this warranted the signing of the Pact.

The moment the Pact was signed, complaints of non-fulfilment were levelled against the Government, and soon Gandhi was again negotiating, this time with the new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon. Adjustments made, the Congress convention at Karachi which, according to Bose, was 'the pinnacle of the Mahatma's popularity and prestige', elected Gandhi its sole delegate to the second Round Table Conference.

At noon on August 29th, Gandhi sailed from Bombay aboard the *S. S. Rajputana*. Accompanying him in various capacities were Pandit Malaviya, Mrs. Naidu, his son Devadas, Mahadev Desai who, Gandhi said, 'out-Boswelled Boswell', Pyarelal Nayyar, a secretary and disciple, Miss Slade, who had made India her permanent home and Gandhi her spiritual father, and G. D. Birla, the big Indian industrialist. 'There is every chance of my returning empty-handed,' he said on embarking.

Gandhi had given orders that he and his party should travel by the lowest class. When he discovered how much luggage they had brought he saw to it that seven suitcases and trunks were sent back from Aden. He himself spent most of the day and all night on deck, spinning, writing, sleeping, eating, praying, talking and playing with child passengers. Like so many steamship passengers the world over, he was the Captain's guest on the bridge, where he looked through the sextant and steered the ship for a minute.

Gandhi arrived in London on September 12th, and remained in England until December 5th. He stayed in an East End Settlement House called Kingsley Hall as guest of Muriel Lester who had visited him in 1926. Kingsley Hall is five miles from the centre of the city and from St. James's Palace where the Round Table Conference sat.

Friends told him that he would save many hours for work and sleep if he lived in an hotel, but he did not want to spend the money. Nor would he avail himself of the hospitality of Indians and Englishmen who had big houses nearer the heart of London. He would come home to Kingsley Hall every evening, often very late, because, he said, he enjoyed living among his own kind, the poor people. To spare interviewers the necessity of coming all the way to the East End, however, he agreed, under

pressure, to keep a little office at 88 Knightsbridge. (The building was destroyed in the second World War).

In the mornings, he walked through the slum streets around Kingsley Hall, and women and men going to work would smile and greet him and some would join him for conversation; he visited several in their homes. Children ran up and held his hand. 'Uncle Gandhi', they called him. One mischievous youngster yelled, 'Hey, Gandhi, where's your trousers?' The Mahatma laughed heartily.

Questioned by a reporter about his dress, Gandhi said, 'You people wear plus-fours, mine are minus fours.' Gandhi was wonderful newspaper copy, and journalists covered every move he made. The dailies and weeklies in Europe and America eagerly sought special features about him. George Slocombe wrote a story about Gandhi's generosity and as an illustration said that when the Prince of Wales visited India the Mahatma prostrated himself before him. The next time Gandhi saw Slocombe, he smiled and said, 'Well, Mr. Slocombe, this does not even do credit to your imagination. I would bend the knee before the poorest untouchable in India for having participated in crushing him for centuries, I would take the dust off his feet. But I would not prostrate myself, not even before the King, much less before the Prince of Wales, for the simple reason that he represented insolent might.' Gandhi went to Buckingham Palace to have tea with King George V and Queen Mary. On the eve of the event, all England was agog over what he would wear. He wore a loincloth, sandals, a shawl and his dangling watch. Later, someone asked Gandhi whether he had had enough on. 'The King,' he replied, 'had enough on for both of us.'

David Lloyd George, Britain's war-time Prime Minister, invited Gandhi to his farm at Churt, in Surrey. They talked for three hours. In 1938, when I saw Lloyd George at

Churt, he mentioned the Gandhi visit. He said the servants did what no guest had ever inspired them to do: they all came out to meet the holy man.

Four years later, I told Gandhi that Lloyd George had talked to me about his visit. 'Yes,' Gandhi queried eagerly. 'What did he say?'

'He told me that you squatted on his couch and just as you got settled a black cat they had never seen before entered through the window and rested in your lap.'

'That's correct,' Gandhi recalled.

'And when you left, Lloyd George said, the cat disappeared.'

'Ah,' Gandhi said, 'that I don't know.'

'Lloyd George,' I continued, 'said that the same cat returned when Miss Slade visited him at Churt.'

'That too I don't know,' Gandhi declared.

As soon as Gandhi reached England he inquired about Colonel Maddock who had performed the operation on him for appendicitis in 1924, and the moment he found some leisure he went down to spend some hours at the home of Colonel and Mrs. Maddock near Reading where they sat in the beautiful garden and reminisced and told one another they did not look a year older.

Charlie Chaplin asked to see Gandhi. Gandhi had never heard of him; he had never seen a moving picture. On being enlightened, Gandhi said no, he had no special interest in actors. But when told that Chaplin came from a poor family in the London East End, he received him at the home of Dr. Katial. The encounter turned into a competition between toothless and toothsome smiling and the inevitable discussion about Gandhi's attitude to the machine, which was Chaplin's first question. The answer may have inspired one of the actor's subsequent films.

George Bernard Shaw also paid his respects. With

unusual modesty he gave the palm to Gandhi and called himself 'Mahatma Minor'. 'You and I,' he said, 'belong to a very small community on earth.' They touched on a score of subjects and Shaw's humour immensely amused 'Mahatma Major', but it cannot be said that Gandhi liked the playwright's love of the word that shocks. Neither had Tolstoy.

Gandhi met Lord Irwin, General Smuts, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Dean of Canterbury, Harold J. Laski, C. P. Scott, the retired editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, Arthur Henderson and hundreds of others. Churchill declined to see him. Smuts said, apropos South Africa, 'I did not give you such a bad time as you gave me.'

'I did not know that,' Gandhi apologized.

At the Montessori Training College Gandhi joyously drank in the beautiful rhythmic exercises of the healthy, happy children who made him think, with sadness, of 'the millions of children in semi-starved Indian villages'. Madame Maria Montessori introduced him as 'Noble Master'. 'Thought of world civilization and thought of the child,' she said, 'that is what links us . . .' In his speech, Gandhi declared, 'I believe implicitly that the child is not born mischievous in the bad sense of the term. If parents behave themselves while the child is growing, the child will instinctively obey the law of truth and the law of love . . . From my experience of hundreds—I was going to say thousands—of children, I know that they have a finer sense of honour than you and I have . . . Jesus never uttered a loftier or grander truth than when he said that wisdom cometh out of the mouths of babes. I believe it. . . .'

With what is regarded as typical American enterprise, the Columbia Broadcasting System arranged for a radio address to the United States the day after Gandhi's arrival

in England. He refused to prepare a script and spoke extemporaneously. In the studio, he eyed the microphone, and said, 'Do I have to speak into that?' He was already on the air.

India's struggle, Gandhi stated, had drawn the attention of the world not because Indians were fighting for their freedom, but because 'the means adopted by us for attaining that liberty are unique, and as far as history shows us, have not been adopted by any other people . . . Hitherto, nations have fought in the manner of the brute. They have wreaked vengeance upon those whom they have considered to be their enemies . . . We in India,' Gandhi continued, 'have endeavoured to reverse the process. We feel that the law that governs brute creation . . . is inconsistent with human dignity. I personally would wait, if need be for ages, rather than seek to attain the freedom of my country through bloody means. I feel in the innermost recesses of my heart . . . that the world is sick unto death of blood-spilling. The world is seeking a way out and I flatter myself with the belief that perhaps it will be the privilege of the ancient land of India to show the way out to the hungering world. . . .

'It is a matter of deep humiliation to confess that we are a house divided against itself, that we Hindus and Mussulmans are flying at one another. It is a matter of still deeper humiliation that we Hindus regard several million of our own kith and kin as too degraded even for our touch.'

He then elaborated on the curse of drink and of drugs and on the destruction, by the East India Company, of village industries for the benefit of British manufacturers. At this juncture, a note was passed to Gandhi saying his time was almost up and New York would cut him off in three minutes. Unperturbed, he delved still further into

the economics of British rule, and closed with a plea: 'May I not, then, on behalf of the semi-starved millions, appeal to the conscience of the world to come to the rescue of a people dying to regain its liberty?'

The C.B.S. producer signalled to stop. 'Well, that's over,' Gandhi said. He was still on the air. His voice was clear and the reception perfect.

In his eighty-four days in England, Gandhi visited Eton, Cambridge, where he sentimentally asked to be taken to Trinity, which was Jawaharlal Nehru's and C. F. Andrews's college, and Oxford, and addressed scores of public meetings of women's organizations, Quakers, Indian students, Indian merchants, British students, Labourites, Members of Parliament, the London School of Economics, The American Journalists Association, which arranged a vegetarian luncheon at the Savoy in deference to his habits, Friends of India, Temperance Society, Vegetarians, etc. etc.

Gandhi's two weekends at Oxford were memorable. He stayed with Professor Lindsay, the Master of Balliol, who later became a peer, Lord Lindsay of Birker. 'Both my wife and I said', Lindsay wrote in 1948, 'that having him in our house was like having a saint in the house. He showed that mark of a great and simple man that he treated everyone with the same courtesy and respect whether one were a distinguished statesman or an unknown student. Anyone who was in earnest in wanting an answer to a question got a real one.'

Another view of Gandhi at Oxford was expressed by Dr. Edward Thompson, at whose home, on his second Oxonian weekend, Gandhi had a discussion with a group that included the Master of Balliol, Gilbert Murray, Professor S. Coupland, Sir Michael Sadler, P. C. Lyon and other trained minds. 'He can be exasperating,' Professor Thompson remarked after Gandhi's visit.

Describing the intellectual joust, Thompson said, 'For three hours he was sifted and cross-examined . . . It was a reasonably exacting ordeal, yet not for a moment was he rattled or at a loss. The conviction came to me, that not since Socrates has the world seen his equal for absolute self-control and composure; and once or twice, putting myself in the place of men who had to confront that invincible calm and imperturbability, I thought I understood why the Athenians made "the martyr-sophist" drink the hemlock. Like Socrates, he has a "daemon". And when the "daemon" has spoken, he is as unmoved by argument as by danger.'

Apparently, not all those present possessed the Socratic imperturbability, for Professor Thompson says, 'I can still hear Lindsay's desperate tones, as he cited Cromwell's appeal to the Presbyterian ministers — "In the bowels of Christ, I beseech you to think it possible that you may be mistaken" — and added, "Mr. Gandhi! think it *possible* that you may be *mistaken*!" Mr. Gandhi did not think it possible.'

But Mahadev Desai was there, taking notes as usual, and he records Gandhi as pleading for 'the liberty to make mistakes'. On the other hand, Gandhi was adamant in defending civil disobedience; he would never give it up. 'I will not purchase my country's freedom at the cost of non-violence,' he told the professors who thought they could not be mistaken. 'You may be justified', Gandhi admitted, 'in saying that I must go more warily, but if you attack the fundamentals you have to convince me.' They failed.

In all Gandhi's public and private, official and unofficial utterances during his eighty-four days in England, he tried, above all else, to clarify what he meant by the independence of India.

'How far would you cut India off from the Empire?' a member of the audience at the Raleigh Club asked.

'From the Empire entirely,' Gandhi replied. 'From the British nation not at all, if I want India to gain and not to grieve. The Emperorship must go and I should love to be an equal partner with Britain sharing her joys and sorrows and an equal partner with the Dominions. But it must be a partnership on equal terms.'

He advocated 'an honourable partnership . . . We can have a partnership between England and India . . . I still aspire to be a citizen not in the Empire, but in a Commonwealth, in a partnership if possible; if God will it, an indissoluble partnership, but not a partnership superimposed upon one nation by another . . . The Congress does not stand merely for isolated independence which may easily become a menace to the world . . . I would heartily welcome the union of East and West provided it is not based on brute force .... England and India [should be] bound by the silken cord of love . . . India as an independent partner would have a special contribution to make in a world which is getting weary of war and bloodshed. In case of an outbreak of war it would be the common effort of India and Great Britain to prevent war, not indeed by force of arms, but by the irresistible force of example'.

In these statements, Gandhi described precisely, and with remarkable prevision, the status which independent India voluntarily assumed in the Commonwealth in 1948. More, the protagonists of that move used the very argument — and almost the exact words — which Gandhi had used in London seventeen years earlier. Gandhi saw that the only beneficent independence was the kind that led to interdependence. 'Isolated independence is not the goal,' he said. 'It is voluntary interdependence.' He arrived at

this conclusion through no abstruse theorizing about internationalism or world government. Gandhi was addicted to love; it was the basis of his relations with people. Love is creative interdependence. And since Gandhi regarded nations not as abstract legal entities but as agglomerations of human beings with names, noses, aches and smiles, he believed that international relationships should be founded on interdependence and love.

Gandhi had been criticized for acquiescing in Article Two of the Irwin-Delhi Pact of March 5th, 1931, which stated that in the contemplated constitution of India, England would retain control over defence, foreign affairs, minority problems and financial obligations to foreign creditors. It was a severe limitation on freedom. Gandhi took the criticism to heart. Indeed, the Congress convention in Karachi at the end of March 1931, instructed Gandhi to change his position on this key question. Gandhi, accordingly, told British audiences that 'it is part of the mandate given me by Congress that complete independence would be meaningless unless it was accompanied by complete control over finance, defence and external affairs'. This reversal in Gandhi's attitude exasperated the British; he had gone back on his signature. Gandhi had a technical justification in the mandate of Congress, his master. Actually, he attached no political importance to the stipulation in the Delhi Pact and only propaganda importance to his advocacy of the opposite in London. England was not yet parting with power in India. That was the crucial fact. Hair-splitting over who would control what was therefore futile.

This being his approach, Gandhi concentrated more on convincing the British people than on debating with the British government at the Round Table Conference. 'I find that my work lies outside the Conference,' he told one

audience. Referring to his efforts to explain India to England, he said, 'This to me is the real Round Table Conference . . . The seed which is being sown now may result in softening the British spirit . . . and in preventing the brutalization of human beings.' He made friends through his charm, frankness, humanity and accessibility. He won the hearts of the Christians in England who recognized him as a big brother and ally. He touched what was Christian in all Englishmen. He found an echo in their common sense; it was clear after his visit that some day, sooner than some thought, sooner than Churchill wished, India would be liberated. Many considered him 'difficult', and he undoubtedly could be. But he moderated the hostility of the most rabid. He even walked into the lion's den and went to Lancashire where his agitation against foreign cloth and in favour of khadi had caused unemployment and loss of profits. At a meeting, one man said, 'I am one of the unemployed, but if I was in India I would say the same thing that Mr. Gandhi is saying.' There is a telling photograph, taken outside the Greenfield Mill at Darwen, Lancashire, showing Gandhi wrapped in white cotton from neck to knee, overcome with coyness and squeezed in amidst cotton factory workers, most of them women, one of them holding his hand, and all of them, young, old, male, female, cheering the Mahatma and smiling. He made friends among those whom he hurt.

The Government assigned two Scotland Yard detectives, Sergeant Evans and Sergeant Rogers, to guard Gandhi; they were special policemen, giants in stature, usually assigned to protecting royalty. They grew to like 'the little man'. Unlike most prominent personalities in such circumstances, Gandhi did not keep them at arm's length or ignore them. He talked to them and visited their homes

Before leaving England, he begged that they be allowed to accompany him to Brindisi, Italy. The bureaucrat asked the reason for this strange request.

'Because they are part of my family,' Gandhi answered.

From India he sent each a watch engraved 'With love from M. K. Gandhi'.

Between lectures, speeches, forums, press interviews, trips, innumerable individual appointments, and answering a mountain of mail—all with a view to conquering Britain's heart—he attended to the official business which had brought him to London: the second Round Table Conference. His official and unofficial activities unsually kept him busy twenty-one hours a day; diaries preserved show that he sometimes got to bed at 2 a.m., awoke at 3.45 a.m., for prayers, rested again from 5 to 6 a.m., and had no respite from then till the next morning at 1 or 2 a.m. The schedule wore him out; he delighted in driving his body to the maximum of endurance and beyond. As a result, what he gave the Round Table Conference was not of his best quality, yet the participants heard some remarkable, and certainly unique, utterances from his lips. He attended regularly, although most plenary sessions and committee meetings bored him; they were so political that he lost all sense of their reality. Often he sat with eyes closed. He may have slept a few winks.

The purpose of the Round Table Conference was 'constitution-building' for India. Lord Reading, a member of the British delegation, formulated the British purpose in one sentence: 'I believe that the true policy between Britain and India is that we should in this country strive all we can to give effect to the views of India while preserving at the same time our own position, which we must not and cannot abandon.'

How could England give effect to the views of India while remaining the mistress of India?

The Round Table Conference was worse than a failure. By intensifying the religious divisions of India it exercised sinister, tragic influence on the future.

The Conference consisted of 112 delegates: 20 representing the Government of the United Kingdom, 23 from princely India—rajas, maharajas, nawabs and their subordinates—and 64 from British India. The Viceroy appointed the princes, and, with the exception of Gandhi, Mrs. Naidu and a few others, he appointed the visitors from British India.

His selections were careful and purposeful. The British government advocated a federation of princely India, which was roughly a third of India, with British India. This would have introduced the weight of the autocratic princes, British puppets all, into the government of India. Thus what seemed like the unification of the two Indias was calculated to strengthen feudal, medieval reaction and reinforce British rule.

The delegation from British India included the Aga Khan and others like him. It included British merchants, Anglo-Indians, Christians, Hindus, Moslems, landlords, Labourites, untouchables and Parsis (but not one peasant), and each of these groups demanded a separate electorate for itself. In other words, a number of seats in the legislative assemblies would be reserved for Englishmen resident in India, for landlords, for Moslems, etc., and the Englishmen would be elected only by the votes of the Englishmen of India who could vote for no one else, the landlords would be elected by landlords, the Moslems could vote only for Moslem candidates, and so on. Every divisive tendency in India was encouraged.

The Conference set up a Minorities Committee comprising

six Englishmen from England, thirteen Moslems, ten Hindus, two untouchables, two Labourites, two Sikhs, one Parsi, two Indian Christians, one Anglo-Indian (Anglo-Indians are descendants of mixed marriages between British men and Indian women), two Englishmen domiciled in India and four women. Only the women did not ask for a separate electorate. Of the thirteen Moslems in the Committee only one was a nationalist Moslem who was an Indian politically and a follower of the Prophet religiously. The remaining twelve mingled Church and State and put the political interests of their religious community above the welfare of India as a whole.

Mr. Fazl-ul Huq, a Moslem, was addressing the Plenary Session of November 28th, 1931. 'I wonder', he said, 'if Sir Austen Chamberlain has come across two such incongruous specimens of humanity as Dr. Moonje [a Hindu member of the Conference] and myself—professing different religions, worshipping different Gods.'

'The same God,' a member interjected.

'No,' Mr. Fazl-ul Huq demurred, 'no' it cannot be the same God. My God is for separate electorates; his God is for joint electorates.

The Moslem delegate was partitioning God. But Gandhi would not partition God or India. He told the conference he rejected all separate electorates. In an independent India, he said, Indians would vote as Indians for Indians. The virtue of Indian nationalism and its appeal to outsiders was not that it would create new national barriers—there were already too many—but rather that it would rid England and the world of the incubus of imperialism and take religion out of politics in India. Instead, the Round Table Conference, under British management, intensified old and attempted to introduce new fissiparous influences.

'Divide and Rule, is the law of Empire; the more the rule is threatened the more diligently that law is applied.

The solution for India would have been to banish religious considerations from politics. But with all its twentieth-century vitality, Indian nationalism still lacked the strength to unite that which religion, provincial loyalties and economic differences separated. The Indian national movement was faced with the task of liberation before the Indians had been welded into a nation.

The caste system was a further divisive influence which weakened nationalism. The Harijans or untouchables feared and often hated the Hindus who had harnessed so many brutal disabilities upon them. They, too, through their gifted and ambitious representative at the Conference, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, a lawyer who studied at Columbia University of New York under a scholarship from the Geakwar Maharaja of Baroda, demanded a separate electorate or at least a right to a specified number of Hindu seats in the legislative assemblies.

Mahatma Gandhi, a supremely devout Hindu, was incapable of discriminating against anyone on account of religion, race, caste, colour, or anything. His contribution to the equality of untouchables and to the education of a new generation which was Indian instead of Hindu or Moslem or Parsi or Christian has world significance. But at the time of the Round Table Conference of 1931, and especially with the British government pulling in the opposite direction, his arm lacked the power to draw the Hindu, Moslem and Harijan communities together into an Indian unity which could have commanded the British raj to go home.

At the last plenary sitting of the Round Table Conference, on December 1st, 1931, the chairman, James Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister, since the general elections of

October 27th, 1931, not of a Labour government but of a Tory government in which he and J. H. Thomas were prisoners, referred to Gandhi as a Hindu.

'Not Hindu,' Gandhi exclaimed.

To his God, Gandhi was a Hindu. To the British Prime Minister, and in politics, he was an Indian. But there were few such Indians at the Round Table Conference and too few in India.

That was the upshot of the Round Table Conference. It was completely aboritve. It made the situation in India worse. Gandhi left it and England with a heartache, for though he had charmed and convinced many English people, he had failed to bridge or even to narrow the gulf that separated Hindus from Moslems; and the British government was holding on to India.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE WAY HOME

GANDHI sent apologies to persons and groups in almost every free country of the world; he could not visit them because he had work to do in India. On the way home, he stopped for a day in Paris. Sitting on a table, he addressed a large meeting in a cinema theatre, and then took the train for Switzerland, where he stayed five days with Romain Rolland at Villeneuve, at the eastern end of Lake Leman.

Rolland, whose *Fean Christophe* is a literary masterpiece of the twentieth century, had come under the influence of Count Leo Tolstoy, author of the finest novel of the nineteenth. Rolland made a shrewd comparison between Tolstoy and Gandhi. 'With Gandhi,' he said on 1924,

'everything is nature—modest, simple, pure—while all his struggles are hallowed by religious serenity, whereas with Tolstoy everything is proud revolt against pride, hatred against hatred, passion against passion. Everything in Tolstoy is violence, even his doctrine of non-violence.

Tolstoy was storm-tossed, Gandhi calm and equable. Gandhi could not have fled from his wife, or from anything. The market place in which he sat was criss-crossed by hundreds of millions of persons with their wares and carts and cares and thoughts, but he sat still and there was silence in him and around him. Gandhi would have suffocated in an ivory tower or on an Olympian height.

Tagore was different. 'But where am I in a great crowd, squeezed in at all sides?' Romain Rolland quotes Tagore as saying . . . 'And who can understand the noise I hear? If I hear a song, my sitar can catch the melody, and I can join the chorus, for I am a singer. But in the mad clamour of the crowd, my vioce is lost, and I become dizzy.'

Rolland and Gandhi had never met before 1931. Rolland knew Gandhi from long conversations with Tagore and C. F. Andrews who had lived for fifteen years with Tagore. He had also read Gandhi. Like Tagore, Rolland was a singer. He was the author of books on Beethoven, Handel, Goethe and Michelangelo. He wrote a book on Ramakrishna, the Hindu mystic.

Rolland regarded Gandhi as a saint. In fact, he wrote in his 1924 biography of the Mahatma, 'Gandhi is too much of a saint; he is too pure, too free from the animal passions that lie dormant in man.' Rolland and Tagore were afraid of the evil in human beings. Tagore feared that when Gandhi lit bonfires of foreign cloth he would kindle uncontrollable emotions in men; Rolland agreed; Andrews agreed.

This estimate omits Gandhi's faith in the basic goodness

and corrigibility of man which is the essence of Gandhi. In South Africa, Gandhi believed that the ordinary, illiterate, indentured labourer in a mine or on a farm could rise to the purity and restraint required of a Satyagrahi. He trusted the peasants of backward Bardoli to resist provocation and violence. His trust exalted them. Gandhi did not regard nobility as a monopoly of the great man or the artist or the elite. Gandhi's uniqueness lay in working with common clay and finding the soul-spark in it.

Before Gandhi's arrival on December 5th, Rolland had received hundreds of letters connected with the Mahatma's visit: an Italian wanted to know from Gandhi what numbers would win in the next national lottery; a group of Swiss musicians offered to serenade Gandhi under his window every night; the Syndicate of the Milkmen of Leman volunteered to supply 'the King of India' with dairy products during his stay. Journalists sent questionnaires and camped around Rolland's villa; photographers laid siege to the house; the police reported that the hotels had filled with tourists who hoped to see the Indian visitor.

The two men, Gandhi sixty-two, Rolland sixty-five, met like old friends and treated each other with the tenderness of mutual respect. Gandhi arrived on a cold rainy evening with Miss Slade, Mahadev Desai, Pyarelal Nayyar and Devadas. The next day was Monday, Gandhi's day of silence, and Rolland delivered a ninety-minute talk on the tragic moral and social state of Europe since 1900. Gandhi listened and pencilled some questions.

On Tuesday, they discussed Gandhi's trip to Rome. He wanted to see Mussolini and other Italian leaders as well as the Pope. Rolland warned him that the Fascist regime would exploit his presence for its sinister purposes. Gandhi said he would break through the cordon they might throw around him. Rolland suggested that he put certain

conditions. Gandhi replied that it was against his convictions to make such arrangements in advance. Rolland persisted. Gandhi said, 'Then tell me, what is your final opinion on my plan to stop in Rome?' Rolland advised him to stay with some independent persons. Gandhi promised and kept the promise.

Rolland asked Gandhi to comment on his remarks about Europe. Gandhi said it showed him how vast had been Rolland's suffering. Speaking English which Rolland's sister translated into French, Gandhi said he had learned very little from history. 'My method is empiric,' he explained. 'All my conclusions are based on personal experience.' This, he admitted, could be dangerous and misleading, but he had to have faith in his own views. All his trust was in non-violence. It could save Europe. In England, friends tried to show him the weakness of his non-violent method; 'but even though the whole world doubt it, I will continue to believe in it'.

The next two days Gandhi spent in Lausanne where he addressed a public meeting and in Geneva where he spoke in Victory Hall. At each he was heckled for hours by atheists and others. He answered them in perfect calm, 'not a muscle of his face twitching', Rolland wrote.

On December 10th, they resumed their conversation. Rolland recalled Gandhi's statement at Geneva: 'Truth is God.' He gave Gandhi a brief sketch of his life, his childhood, how cramped he felt in the small French town, how he became a writer and struggled with the problem of the truth in art. 'If it is correct', Rolland said, 'that "Truth is God", it appears to me that it lacks one important attribute of God: joy. For—and on this I insist—I recognize no God without joy.'

Gandhi replied that he did not distinguish between art and truth. 'I am against the formula, "Art for art's

sake''. For me, all art must be based on the truth. I reject beautiful things if, instead of expressing truth, they express untruth. I accept the formula "Art brings joy and is good" but on the condition I mentioned. To achieve truth in art I do not expect exact reproductions of external things. Only living things bring living joy to the soul and must elevate the soul.'

Rolland did not differ but he stressed the pain of searching for truth and for God. He took a book from his shelf and read from Goethe. Rolland later confessed that he thought Gandhi's God found pleasure in man's sorrow; Rolland was trying to modify this Gandhian view.

They talked about the perils of another war. 'If one nation possessed the heroism to submit without answering violence with violence,' Gandhi declared, 'it would be the most effective lesson. But for this an absolute faith is necessary.'

Rolland: 'Nothing should be done by halves, no matter whether it is bad or good.' Rolland's sister, Madeleine, and Miss Kondachev, a Russian secretary, were taking notes. Neither recorded Gandhi's reaction to this assertion.

The last day, December 11th, Rolland requested Gandhi to deal with some questions submitted by Pierre Monatte, the editor of a Paris magazine called *The Proletarian Revolution*. In response to one query, Gandhi asserted that if labour was perfectly organized it could dictate conditions to the employers; labour is the only power in the world'. But Rolland interposed that the capitalists might divide the workers; there might be scabs; 'then the conscious minority of labour must set up a dictatorship of the proletariat and force the mass of labour to unite in its own interest'.

'I am absolutely opposed to that,' Gandhi affirmed.

Rolland dropped the subject and quickly introduced several others: non-violence in relation to criminals, etc. etc., and 'What do you call God? Is it a spiritual personality or a force which rules over the world?'

'God,' Gandhi replied, 'is not a person . . . God is an eternal principle. That is why I say that Truth is God . . . Even atheists do not doubt the necessity of truth.'

The last evening Gandhi asked Rolland to play some Beethoven. Rolland played the Andante from the Fifth Symphony and, as an encore of his own accord, Gluck's 'Elysian Fields'.

The theme of the Fifth Symphony is considered to be man's struggle with fate, man's harmony with fate, the brotherhood of man. The second movement, the Andante, is melodious and suffused with tender lyrical emotions, quiet nobility and optimism. Rolland chose it because it came closest to his concept of Gandhi's personality. It is gentle and loving. In the Gluck piece one almost hears the angels singing to the strains of the flute. It is celestial music, full of purity and clarity. The *Gita* might be set to it.

Rolland was frail and had just recovered from bronchitis, but he insisted on taking Gandhi and his party to the railway station. There they embraced, as they did when they first met; Gandhi pressed his cheek against Rolland's shoulder and threw his right arm around Rolland; Rolland touched his cheek to Gandhi's head. 'It was the kiss of St. Dominic and St. Francis,' Rolland said.

The Italian government wished Gandhi to be its guest and made the corresponding preparations. Gandhi politely refused and stayed with General Moris, a friend of Rolland's, who had lived in India. The day of his arrival, the Mahatma went to see the Duce. An official communique

said the interview lasted twenty minutes. Gandhi's companions recall that it lasted only ten minutes. Gandhi could establish no psychological contact with Mussolini. 'He has the eyes of a cat,' Gandhi said later; 'they moved about in every direction as if in constant rotation. The visitor would totally succumb before the awe of his gaze like a rat running directly into the mouth of a cat out of mere fright.

'I was not to be dazed like that,' Gandhi testified, 'but I noticed that he had so arranged things about him that a visitor would easily get stricken with terror. The walls of the passage through which one has to pass to reach him are all overstudded with various types of swords and other weapons.' Mussolini's office, too, Gandhi noted, was hung with weapons, but, he added, 'he keeps no arms on his person'.

The Pope did not see Gandhi. Several members of Gandhi's entourage thought the Holy Father might have been acting in deference to Il Duce's wishes, but they did not know. Some suggested that the interview failed to materialize not only on account of Mussolini's relations with the Vatican but also because of Anglo-Italian relations; Gandhi, after all, was an anti-British rebel.

Gandhi was taken to the Rome-Naples rugby match and to a parade of the young Balilla Musketeers where he was received with a salvo of cannon. He was more interested in the Vatican Library, and spent two happy hours in St. Peter's. In the Sistine Chapel he stood before Christ on the Cross and wept. 'One cannot help being moved to tears,' he said to Mahadev Desai. If he could have lingered 'two or three months' in the museums and observed the statues and paintings every day, Gandhi wrote to the ashram, he might have an opinion that was worth while. Even then, 'I am hardly qualified as an art critic.'

Romain Rolland, however, had directed his attention to

art. 'I do not think that European art is superior to Indian art,' Gandhi boasted. 'Both these arts have developed on different lines. Indian art is based entirely on the imagination,' he wrote to a friend; he was probably recalling the Indian statues with many arms and heads. 'European art is an imitation of nature. It is therefore easier to understand but turns our attention to the earth, whereas Indian art, when understood, tends to direct our thoughts to Heaven.'

Then he checked himself. 'This is only for a person like you,' he cautioned. 'I attach no importance to these views. It may be my unconscious partiality for India or perhaps my ignorance that makes me say this.'

To Gandhi, art had to be spiritual. 'True beauty', he said in his autobiography, 'consists in purity of heart.'

'Jesus [he wrote in *Young India*] was to my mind a supreme artist, because he saw and expressed Truth ... But I know that many call themselves artists, and are recognized as such, and yet in their work there is absolutely no trace of the soul's upward surge and unrest ... True art is thus an expression of the soul ... All true art must help the soul to realize its inner self. In my own case, I find that I can do entirely without external forms in my soul's realization. I can claim, therefore, that there is truly sufficient art in my life, though you might not see what you call works of art about me. My room may have blank walls. And I may even dispense with the roof, so that I may gaze upon the starry heavens overhead that stretch in an unending expanse of beauty ... Is a woman with fair features necessarily beautiful? ... Socrates, we are told, was the most truthful man of his time and yet his features are said to have been the ugliest in Greece. To my mind he was beautiful because he was struggling after truth ... Truth is the first thing to be sought for, and beauty and goodness

will then be added unto you . . . True art takes note not merely of form but also of what lies beyond. There is an art that kills and an art that gives life. True art must be evidence of the happiness, contentment and purity of its authors.'

Before Gandhi left Rome he sought out Tolstoy's daughter. As he sat spinning on the floor of her apartment, Princess Maria, a daughter of the King of Italy, entered with a lady-in-waiting, and brought the Mahatma a large basket of figs.

'Her Majesty the Queen packed them for you,' said the lady-in-waiting.

Nobody exploited Gandhi's presence for pro-Fascist purposes although the *Giornale d'Italia* did print an interview with him which he never gave by a journalist he had never seen. Altogether, from Swiss border to the Italian heel, Gandhi spent forty-eight hours in Italy. At Brindisi, he bade farewell to his two Scotland Yard men, but not to Professor and Mrs. Edmond Privat.

The professor and his wife were friends of Romain Rolland and accompanied Gandhi from Villeneuve to the Italian frontier. As they were saying goodbye they remarked that they would like some day to visit India. Gandhi asked why they didn't come along with him. They replied that they could not afford it.

'You probably think in terms of first and second class,' Gandhi said, 'but we only pay ten pounds each for our passage on deck, and once there, many Indian friends would open their houses to you.'

The Privats counted the money in their pockets and purse and decided to go. At Rome they bought bedding, sent telegrams to the University of Neuchatel, where the professor taught, that he would not be back for his lectures, and on December 14th boarded the S.S. *Pilsna* at Brindisi

with the Gandhi party. Two weeks later they landed at Bombay.

A mammoth crowd cheered Gandhi's arrival on the morning of December 28th. 'I have come back empty-handed,' he told them, 'but I have not compromised the honour of my country.' That was his summary of how India had fared at the Round Table Conference. But things were blacker than he thought.

CHAPTER V

CLIMAX

NEVER was deck passenger accorded such a regal welcome; 'judging from the warmth, cordiality and affection displayed at the reception, one would think that the Mahatma had returned with Swaraj in the hollow of his hand', Subhas Chandra Bose remarked caustically. He had returned with his integrity; he had not stepped down from the role of half-naked fakir who parleyed as an equal with the mighty British Empire. This was the next best thing to freedom, for it reflected the liberation of India's spirit. Since the Salt March, and specially since the Irwin-Gandhi Pact, India felt free. Gandhi fed that feeling, and Indians were grateful. Moreover, their Mahatma had come back safely from the cold world across the sea.

India's partial liberation was achieved in 1930-31, thanks to Gandhi, Irwin and the British Labour government. But Irwin was gone; and in October 1931, Ramsay MacDonald's Labour government had been supplanted by a Cabinet, headed by MacDonald, in which Conservatives predominated. Sir Samuel Hoare, 'an honest and frank-hearted

Englishman', according to Gandhi, and an honest and frank Conservative, was Secretary of State for India.

The new British government proceeded to attack India's new sense of freedom.

A full report was poured into Gandhi's ear from the moment he set foot on the Bombay quay on December 28th. By evening he had a detailed picture of the ugly situation and conveyed it to the two hundred thousand listeners whom he addressed, with the aid of loudspeakers, on the vast Azad Maidan.

Jawaharlal Nehru and Tasadduq Sherwani, Moslem president of the Congress organization of the United Provinces, had been arrested two days earlier while travelling to Bombay to greet Gandhi. Emergency Powers Ordinances had been promulgated early in December in the United Provinces and in the North-west Frontier Province and Bengal to deal with a widespread no-rent movement; they authorized the military to seize buildings, impound bank balances, confiscate wealth, arrest suspects without a warrant, suspend court trials, deny bail and habeas corpus, withdraw mailing privileges from the press, disband political organizations, and prohibit picketing and boycotting. 'We are not playing a game with artificial rules,' Sir Harry Haig, Home Member (Minister of Interior) of the government of India, said in the Assembly. 'The question is whether the Congress is going to impose its will on the whole country.'

'All this,' Gandhi told his Bombay audience, 'I learned after my landing here. I take it these are all Christmas gifts from Lord Willingdon, our Christian Viceroy. For is it not a custom during Christmas to exchange greetings and gifts? Something had to be given me and this is what I have got.' (He had not yet unwrapped all the packages.)

The same evening he spoke to the Welfare of India

League in the Hotel Majestic. 'I am not conscious of a single experience throughout my three months' stay in England and Europe,' he asserted, 'that made me feel that after all East is East and West is West. On the contrary, I have been convinced more than ever that human nature is much the same, no matter under what clime it flourishes, and that if you approached people with trust and affection you would have ten-fold trust and thousand-fold affection returned to you.'

The members of the British government were friendly to him; 'we parted as the best of friend . . . But when I come here I find a different order of things altogether . . .' He summarized the extraordinary ordinances. 'The Congress is charged with trying to run a parallel government . . . I assure you that I shall strain every nerve to see if I would not tender co-operation on honourable lines to induce the Government to withdrawn or revise these ordinances.'

The Government had no intention of letting Gandhi offer anything.

The day after his arrival, Gandhi telegraphed the Viceroy deploring the ordinances and arrests and suggesting an interview. The Viceroy's secretary replied on the last day of the year; the ordinances were justified by the activities of Congress against the Government. The Viceroy would be 'willing to see you and to give you his views as to the way in which you can best exert your influence', the secretary said. 'But His Excellency feels bound to emphasize that he will not be prepared to discuss with you measures which the Government of India, with the full approval of His Majesty's Government, have found it necessary to adopt in Bengal, the United Provinces and the N.W.F.P.'

The British raj would no longer parley with the rebel.

Gandhi's rejoinder defended Congress and intimated that he might have to start a civil disobedience campaign.

The Viceroy's secretary answered sharply on January 2nd, 1932. 'His Excellency and the government', he wrote, 'can hardly believe that you or the Working Committee [Executive Committee of Congress] contemplate that His Excellency can invite you, with the hope of any advantage, to an interview held under the threat of the resumption of civil disobedience... nor can the Government of India accept the position implied in your telegram that its policy should be dependent on the judgment of yourself as to the necessity of measures which the government has taken....'

Willingdon was right. No autocracy can permit a private citizen or organization to question its acts.

Gandhi replied on the same day. He had not threatened; he had expressed an opinion. Moreover, he had negotiated with Irwin, prior to the Delhi Pact, while civil disobedience was actually in progress. He never thought the Government had to depend on his judgment, 'But I do submit,' Gandhi wired, 'that any popular and constitutional government would always welcome and consider sympathetically suggestions made by public bodies and their representatives....'

The Government 'has banged the door in my face,' Gandhi informed the nation on January 3rd. The next day, the Government banged an iron door in his face: he was arrested—again, as after the Salt March, under Regulation XXXV of 1827; again he was His Majesty's guest in Yeravda Jail. A few weeks earlier he had been the guest of His and Her Majesty in Buckingham Palace.

The Government attack on Congress was fierce. Congress organizations were closed and almost all leaders imprisoned; in January, 14,800 persons were jailed for political reasons; in February, 17,800. Winston Churchill declared that the repressive measures were more drastic than any since the 1857 Mutiny.

Mahatma Gandhi enjoyed a special regime in prison. In 1930, in the same Yeravda Jail, the chief warden came to him and asked how many letters he needed to receive from the outside each week.

'I do not need to receive a single letter,' Gandhi replied.

'How many letters do you wish to write?' the warden inquired.

'Not one,' Gandhi said.

He was given unlimited privileges to write and receive correspondence.

Major Martin, the prison governor, bought furniture, crockery and other utensils for Gandhi. 'For whom have you bought all this,' Gandhi protested. 'Take it away, please.'

Major Martin said he had permission from the central authorities to spend a minimum of three hundred rupees a month on such an honoured guest. 'That is all very well,' Gandhi declared, 'but this money comes from the Indian treasury, and I do not want to increase the burdens of my country. I hope that my boarding expenses will not exceed thirty-five rupees a month.' The special equipment was removed.

At Yeravda an official named Quinn asked Gandhi to teach him Gujarati and he used to come every day for his lesson. One morning, Quinn failed to appear, and on inquiry Gandhi was told that the official was busy at a hanging in the prison. 'I feel as though I am going to be sick,' Gandhi said.

Vallabhbhai Patel too was arrested and lodged at Yeravda. In March, Mahadev Desai was transferred from another jail to Yeravda: Gandhi had asked for his companionship. When Mahadev arrived he laid his head on Gandhi's feet, and Gandhi patted his head and shoulders affectionately. The three enjoyed numerous conversations

together in which other prisoners and British wardens and physicians sometimes joined.

Gandhi read the newspapers more carefully than he did outside, washed his own clothes, spun, studied the stars at night, and read many books; he liked Upton Sinclair's *The Wet Parade,* Goethe's *Faust,* Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* and others. He also put the finishing touches on a tiny book most of which he had written in Yeravda in 1930 in the form of letters to Sabarmati Ashram. He entitled it *From Yeravda Mandir;* 'mandir' is a temple; the prison was a temple for he worshipped God in it. The booklet, supplemented by occasional articles and pronouncements at other times, furnishes a key to Gandhi's thinking on the nature of God and the ideal conduct of a man.

'God is,' Gandhi said.

The word *satya* means 'truth', and it derives from *sat* which means 'to be'. *Sat* also denotes God. Therefore, God is that which is. 'And since', according to Gandhi, 'nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is.' Everything else is illusion. God is the only truth.

Over the years Gandhi tried many times to prove the existence of God. 'There is an indefinable mysterious Power', he wrote, 'which pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen Power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses.

'But', he added optimistically, 'it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent . . . There is an orderliness in the Universe, there is an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law, for no blind law can govern the conduct of human beings . . . That law then which governs all

life is God . . . I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living Power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves, and recreates. That informing Power or spirit is God . . . In the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, and Love. He is Love. He is the supreme Good.'

After this valiant rational effort, Gandhi says, 'But He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if He ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it. He must express Himself in every smallest act of His votary. This can only be done through a definite realization more real than the five senses can ever produce. Sense perceptions can be, often are, false and deceptive however real they may appear to us. Where there is realization outside the senses it is infallible. It is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within.'

That was another attempt at proof, this time not by logic but by the palpable testimony of human behaviour. But 'faith transcends reason', he confessed; consequently, 'the safest course is to believe in the moral government of the world and therefore in the supremacy of the moral law, the law of truth and love . . . If we could solve all the mysteries of the Universe, we would be co-equal with God. Every drop of ocean shares its glory but is not the ocean'. Every human being, in other words, partakes of the nature of God but is not God and cannot know what He is. Even the greatest Hindu sage, Sankara, did not know more than that God is 'Not this' and 'Not that'.

Except as a youth, Gandhi never doubted the existence of God, as Jains and Buddhists may. 'I literally believe,'

he said, 'that not a blade of grass grows or moves without His will . . . God is nearer to us than fingernails to the flesh . . . I can tell you this, that I am surer of His existence than of the fact that you and I are sitting in this room . . . You may pluck out my eyes, but that cannot kill me. You may chop off my nose, but that will not kill me. But blast my belief in God, and I am dead.'

Gandhi, moreover, was convinced of the large and intimate role which God played in this work. 'Whatever striking things I have done in life,' he declared, 'I have not done prompted by reason but prompted by instinct—I would say God. Take the Dandi Salt March of 1930. I had not the ghost of a suspicion how the breach of the Salt Law would work itself out. Pandit Motilalji and other friends were fretting and did not know what I would do, and I could tell them nothing as I myself knew nothing about it. But like a flash it came, and as you know it was enough to shake the country from one end to the other.'

'Do you feel a sense of freedom in your communion with God?' someone asked.

'I do,' Gandhi replied. 'I have imbibed through and through the teaching of the *Gita* that man is the maker of his own destiny in the sense that he has freedom of choice as to the manner in which he uses that freedom. But he is no controller of results. The moment he thinks he is, he comes to grief.

'I have no special revelation of God's will,' Gandhi explained. 'My firm belief is that He reveals Himself daily to every human being, but we shut our ears to the "still small voice" . . . God never appears to you in person but in action.'

How did Gandhi worship God? He believed in the efficacy of prayer. 'Prayer is the key of the morning and the bolt of the evening . . . As food is necessary for the body,

prayer is necessary for the soul . . . No act of mine is done without prayer . . . I am not a man of learning, but I humbly claim to be a man of prayer. I am indifferent to the form. Every man is a law unto himself in that respect.' But 'it is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart'. One can pray in the silence that has banished words.

Nevertheless, the highway to God was through action. For ten days Gandhi and E. Stanley Jones, an American missionary, discussed a variety of topics, chiefly religion. One day Gandhi said, 'If one is to find salvation, he must have as much patience as a man who sits by the seaside and with a straw picks up a single drop of water, transfers it and thus empties the ocean.' Salvation, according to Gandhi, comes—as Dr. Jones understood it—'through one's strict, disciplined efforts, a rigid self-mastery'.

'But I,' E. Stanley Jones declares, 'look on salvation, not as an attainment through one's efforts, but as an obtainment through grace. I came to God morally and spiritually bankrupt with nothing to offer except my bankruptcy. To my astonishment He took me, forgave me, and sent my soul singing its way down the years. By grace was I saved through faith, and that not of myself; it was the gift of God . . . It was at this point that the Christians and the Mahatma never got together.

'I know,' Dr. Jones adds, 'that salvation by grace seems too cheap and easy, but it is not cheap; for when you take the gift, you belong for ever to the Giver.'

Gandhi took the hard road. His doctrine was: By their works shall ye know them. His God required him to live for humanity. 'If I could persuade myself', Gandhi wrote, 'that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave I would proceed there immediately. But I know I cannot find him apart from humanity . . . I claim to know my millions. All

the hours of the day I am with them. They are my first care and last because I recognize no God except that God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions.'

Gandhi's relation with God was part of a triangle which included his fellow man. On this triangle he based his system of ethics and morality.

The first duty of the God-worshipper is truth: for truth is God. This Gandhi repeated thousands of times: 'Truth is God.'

'There should be Truth in thought, Truth in speech and Truth in action,' Gandhi wrote in *From Yeravda Mandir*. 'Devotion to Truth is the sole justification of our existence.' This Truth is honesty, and also something else: 'It is impossible for us to realize perfect Truth so long as we are imprisoned in this mortal frame . . . if we shatter the chains of egotism, and melt into the ocean of humanity, we share its dignity. To feel that we are something is to set up a barrier between God and ourselves; to cease feeling that we are something is to become one with God. A drop in the ocean partakes of the greatness of its parent, although it is unconscious of it. But it is dried up as soon as it enters upon an existence independent of the ocean.'

Truth is identification with God and humanity. From Truth, non-violence is born. Truth appears different to different individuals. 'There is nothing wrong in every man following Truth according to his lights,' says *From Yeravda Mandir*. Each person must be true to his own Truth. But if the seeker after Truth began to destroy those who saw Truth in their way he would recede from the Truth. How can one realize God by killing or hurting? Non-violence, however, is more than peacefulness or pacifism; it is love, and excludes evil thought, undue haste, lies, or hatred.

First, Truth; second, non-violence or Love; and third,

chastity. 'If a man gives his love to one woman, or a woman to a man, what is there left for all the world besides? It simply means, "We two first, and the devil take the rest of them."... Such persons cannot rise to the height of Universal Love.'

Then are married people lost for ever? No, 'if the married couple can think of each other as brother and sister, they are freed for universal service'. This is the maximum programme for the monks and nuns of the ashram. For the rank and file of humanity 'Sex urge is a fine and noble thing. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. But it is meant only for the act of creation. Any other use of it is a sin against God and humanity... Indulgence interfered with my work.'

The next injunction to the ashramites is 'Non-stealing' which implies non-possession. 'Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants....'

'Anxiety about the future,' Gandhi said to a friend, 'is sheer atheism. Why should we fear that our children will be less efficient or successful than we are? To save money for the sake of children is to show lack of faith in them,' and in God. Attachment to money or possessions is the product of fear. Violence is the result of fear. Dishonesty is fear. Fearlessness is the key to Truth, to God, to Love; it is the king of virtues.

The remaining virtues are: the removal of untouchability which 'means love for, and service of, the whole world'; 'bread-labour' or regular productive manual work; tolerance of all religions; humility; and, finally, spinning and the encouragement of domestic national economy without 'ill-will towards the foreigner'.

Few inside or outside the ashram ever lived up to Gandhi's austere code, only he approached his ideal

While Gandhi was editing these simple epistles on God and ethics in his prison-'temple', India moved towards its tensest fortnight in modern history.

It centred around saving Gandhi's life.

'To find a parallel for the anguish of September 1932', wrote Rajagopalachari, 'we have to go back to Athens twenty-three centuries ago when the friends of Socrates surrounded him in prison and importuned him to escape from death. Plato has recorded the questions and answers. Socrates smiled at the suggestion . . . and preached the immortality of the soul.'

The 'Anguish of September 1932' began for Gandhi early that year. He had gathered from the newspapers that the proposed new British constitution of India would grant separate electorates not only to Hindus and Moslems as in the past but to untouchables, or 'Depressed Classes'. He accordingly wrote a letter on March 11th, 1932, to Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India.

'A separate electorate for the Depressed Classes', Gandhi wrote, 'is harmful for them and for Hinduism . . . So far as Hinduism is concerned, separate electorates would simply vivisect and disrupt it . . . The political aspect, important though it is, dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issue.' If therefore the Government decided to create a separate electorate for untouchables, 'I must fast unto death'. That, he knew, would embarrass the authorities whose prisoner he was, but 'for me the contemplated step is not a method, it is part of my being'.

The minister replied to the prisoner on April 13th, saying that no decision had yet been taken and that his views would be considered before it was taken.

No new developments occurred until August 17th, 1932,

when Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald announced Britain's decision in favour of separate electorates.

'I have to resist your decision with my life,' Gandhi wrote to Ramsay MacDonald the next day. 'The only way I can do it is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind save water with or without salt and soda.' The fast would commence at noon, September 20th.

In a very long reply, dated 10 Downing Street, September 8th, 1932, Prime Minister MacDonald said he had received Gandhi's communication 'with much surprise and, let me add, with very sincere regret'. Gandhi had misunderstood; they had considered his known friendship for the untouchables and his letter to Sir Samuel Hoare. 'We felt it our duty to safeguard what we believe to be the right of the Depressed Classes to a fair proportion of representation in the legislatures' and 'we were equally careful to do nothing that would split off their community from the Hindu world.'

Then MacDonald cogently defended the Government's decision: 'Under the government scheme the Depressed Classes will remain part of the Hindu community and will vote with the Hindu electorate on an equal footing.' That is what Gandhi wanted. 'But for the first twenty years, while still remaining part of the Hindu community, they will receive through a limited number of special constituencies, means of safeguarding their rights and interests....'

In other words, MacDonald emphasized, the untouchables would have one vote in the Hindu electorate, and many of them would have a second vote in their special untouchable electorate. They will 'have two votes', he wrote. Surely Gandhi, their champion, could not object.

The alternative method, 'reservation of seats', MacDonald declared, had been rejected because, though it would

reserve a number of seats for untouchable legislators within the larger block of Hindu seats, 'in practically all cases, such members would be elected by a majority consisting of higher caste Hindus'. That being the case, the Prime Minister implied, they might be stooges of caste Hindus: they would have to keep in the good graces of caste Hindus, and might not be 'in a position to speak for themselves'.

So, MacDonald reasoned, 'you propose to adopt the extreme course of starving yourself to death not in order to secure that the Depressed Classes should have joined electorates with other Hindus, because that is already provided, nor to maintain the unity of Hindus, which is also provided, but solely to prevent the Depressed Classes, who admittedly suffer from terrible disabilities today, from being able to secure a limited number of representatives of their own choosing to speak on their behalf on the legislatures . . . .' Therefore, MacDonald could only think that Gandhi's proposal to fast was based on a misapprehension. The Government's decision would stand.

Gandhi's letter of September 9th, from Yeravda Central Prison to 10 Downing Street, was typical.

Without arguing, I affirm that to me this matter is one of pure religion. The mere fact of the Depressed Classes having double votes does not protect them or Hindu society in general from being disrupted. You will please permit me to say that no matter how sympathetic you may be, you cannot come to a correct decision on a matter of vital and religious importance to the parties concerned.

I should not be against even over-representation of the Depressed Classes. What I am against is their statutory separation, even in a limited form, from the Hindu fold, so long as they choose to belong to it. Do you realize that if

your decision stands and the constitution comes into being, you arrest the marvellous growth of the work of Hindu reformers who have dedicated themselves to their suppressed brethren in every walk of life?

Gandhi added that he was also opposed to the other separate electorates 'only I do not consider them to be any warrant for calling from me such self-immolation as my conscience has prompted me in the matter of the Depressed Classes'.

That ended Gandhi's correspondence with London.

MacDonald was not alone in his bewilderment. Many Indians, some Hindus, were perplexed. Jawaharlal Nehru was in prison when he heard Gandhi would fast. 'I felt angry with him', he writes in his autobiography, 'at his religious and sentimental approach to a political issue, and his frequent references to God in connection with it.' Nehru 'felt annoyed with him for choosing a side issue for his final sacrifice'. Untouchability was a side issue, independence the central issue. For two days, Nehru 'was in darkness'. He thought with sorrow of never seeing Bapu any more.

'Then a strange thing happened to me,' Nehru continues. 'I had quite an emotional crisis, and at the end of it I felt calmer, and the future seemed not so dark. Bapu had a curious knack of doing the right thing at the psychological moment, and it might be that his action—impossible as it was from my point of view—would lead to great results not only in the narrow field in which it was confined, but in the wider aspects of our national struggle . . . Then came the news of the tremendous upheaval all over the country . . . What a magician, I thought, was this little man sitting in Yeravda Prison, and how well he knew how to pull the strings that move people's hearts.'

Even Nehru had underestimated Gandhi's magic and Gandhi's political sagacity.

The Government's fierce repressions against the civil resisters were breaking the back of the movement; it was petering out into pessimism. Gandhi's fast rescued nationalist India from the political doldrums. But compared with the big result, this was a minor by-product.

All Gandhi's adult life he had fought against the 'bar sinister' between caste Hindus and Harijans; even as a boy he laughed at his mother's idea that the touch of an untouchable defiles. Now the British Empire was erecting a political reservation for Harijans. With his congenital impulse to assume the best motives, he was ready to believe that MacDonald and Hoare were acting in the interest, as they saw it, of the Depressed Classes. But he knew India better. Legalisms do not make life; Hindus and Harijans might form a joint electorate, but the Harijans' additional separate electorate would blot out the good psychological effect of the joint electorate. Given a separate electorate, Harijan candidates and elected representatives would stress what divided them from the caste Hindus. A political machine would arise with a vested interest in perpetuating the rift between Harijans and caste Hindus; its political capital would be Hindu injustice. Gandhi felt passionately that untouchability was a perversion which would kill the soul of Hinduism and, in turn, poison the soul of the Harijans. The MacDonald award threatened to give long life to India's worst sin.

Harmony in diversity, love despite differences, was Gandhi's way of eliminating violence in thought and action. To divide is to invite war. Gandhi had fasted for Hindu-Moslem unity; he did not want two Indias. Now he was faced with the prospect of three Indias. He regarded Hindu-Moslem enmity as politically disastrous. The

Hindu-Harijan division was politically disastrous and religiously suicidal. Gandhi could not countenance the widening of the Hindu-Harijan gulf.

The fast, Gandhi said, 'is aimed at a statutory separate electorate, in any shape or form, for the Depressed Classes. Immediately that threat is removed once for all, my fast will end'. He was not fasting against the British, for the Government had stated that if Hindus and Harijans agreed on a different and mutually satisfactory voting arrangement it would be accepted. The fast, Gandhi declared, 'is intended to sting Hindu conscience into right religious action'.

On September 13th Gandhi announced that he would commence his fast unto death on the 20th. India now witnessed something the world had never seen.

On the 13th, political and religious leaders went into action. Mr. M. C. Rajah, an untouchable spokesman in the Legislative Assembly, identified himself with Gandhi's position; Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the great constitutional leader, petitioned the Government to release Gandhi; Yakub Husain, a Moslem leader in Madras, urged the Harijans to renounce the separate electorate; Rajendra Prasad suggested that Hindus save Gandhi by giving Harijans access to their temples, wells, schools and the public roads; Pandit Malaviya convoked a conference of leaders for the 19th; Rajagopalachari asked the country to pray and fast on the 20th.

Several deputations asked to see Gandhi in jail. The Government opened the gates and allowed full consultations with him. Devadas Gandhi arrived to act as intermediary with negotiators. Journalists also enjoyed unobstructed access to Gandhi.

Meanwhile Gandhi wrote copious letters to many friends in India and abroad. 'There was no escape from it,' he

said in a letter to Miss Slade. 'It is both a privilege and a duty. It comes rarely to someone in a generation or generations.' He had been observing the cat family in the prison, he told Miss Slade in the same communication. 'We have an addition to the family, did I tell you? There was a human touch about the mother whilst she was in pain and two or three days after delivery. She would caress us and insist on being caressed. It was a pathetic sight. The care she bestows on the "baby" is very wonderful. Love from us all to you all, Bapu.'

On the 20th, Gandhi awoke at 2-30 a.m. and wrote a letter to Tagore whose approval he craved. 'This is early morning, 3 o'clock of Tuesday,' the Mahatma began. 'I enter the fiery gates at noon. If you can bless the effort I want it. You have been a true friend because you have been a candid friend often speaking your thoughts aloud . . . Though it can now only be during my fast, I will yet prize your criticism, if your heart condemns my action. I am not too proud to make an open confession of my blunder, whatever the cost of the confession, if I find myself in error. If your heart approves of the action I want your blessing. It will sustain me. . . .'

Just as Gandhi posted this letter he received a telegram from Tagore: 'It is worth sacrificing precious life', it read, 'for the sake of India's unity and her social integrity . . . I fervently hope that we will not callously allow such national tragedy to reach its extreme length stop our sorrowing hearts will follow your sublime penance with reverence and love.'

Gandhi thanked Tagore for 'your loving and magnificent wire. It will sustain me in the midst of the storm I am about to enter'.

At 11-30 the same morning, Gandhi took his last meal; it consisted of lemon juice and honey with hot water.

Millions of Indians fasted for twenty-four hours. Throughout the country prayers were sung.

That day, Rabindranath Tagore, whom India and Gandhi affectionately called 'The Poet', addressed his school at Shantiniketan and said, 'A shadow is darkening today over India like a shadow cast by an eclipsed sun. The people of a whole country is suffering from a poignant pain of anxiety, the universality of which carries in it a great dignity of consolation. Mahatmaji, who through his life of dedication has made India his own in truth, has commenced his vow of extreme self-sacrifice.'

Tagore explained the Mahatma's fast:

'Each country has its own inner geography where her spirit dwells and where physical force can never conquer even an inch of ground. Those rulers who come from the outside remain outside the gate . . . But the great soul . . . continues his dominion even when he is physically no longer present . . . The penance which Mahatmaji has taken upon himself is not a ritual but a message to all India and to the world . . . Let us try to understand the meaning of his message . . . No civilized society can thrive upon victims whose humanity has been permanently mutilated . . . Those whom we keep down inevitably drag us down . . . We insult our own humanity by insulting man where he is helpless and where he is not of our own kin . . . Mahatmaji has repeatedly pointed out the danger of those divisions in our country . . . Against that deep-seated moral weakness in our society Mahatmaji has pronounced his ultimatum . . . We have observed that the English people are puzzled at the step that Mahatmaji has been compelled to take. They confess that they fail to understand it. I believe that the reason of their failure is mainly owing to the fact that the language of Mahatmaji is fundamentally different from their own . . . I ask them

to remember the terrible days of atrocities that reddened in blood at their door when dismemberment was being forced between Ireland and the rest of Great Britain. Those Englishmen, who imagined it to be disastrous to the integrity of their empire, did not scruple to kill and be killed, even to tear into shreds the decency of civilized codes of honour.'

The British, Tagore explained, were ready to indulge in the 'Black and Tan' blood bath in Ireland to prevent dismemberment of the Empire. Gandhi was immolating one person, himself, to prevent dismemberment of Indian society. This was the language of non-violence. Is that why the West could not decipher it?

Tagore saw the possibility of losing Gandhi in the fast. The very thought sent a shiver through the spine of the nation. If nothing were done to save him, every Hindu would be Mahatmaji's murderer.

Gandhi lay on a white iron cot in the shade of a low mango tree in the quiet prison yard. Patel and Mahadev Desai sat near him. Mrs. Naidu had been transferred from the women's ward of Yeravda Jail to nurse and guard him from excessive exertion. On a stool were some books, writing paper, bottles of water, salt and soda bicarbonate.

Outside, the negotiators in conference were racing with death. Hindu leaders gathered in Birla House in Bombay on September 20th. There were Sapru, Sir Chunilal Mehta, Rajagopalachari, the president of Congress for that year, G. D. Birla, a very wealthy industrialist and friend of Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, Jayakar, Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, a millionaire patron of schools, and others. The untouchable delegates were Dr. Solanki and Dr. Ambedkar.

Ambedkar, a distinguished lawyer with international experience who had played a big part at the Round Table

Conferences in London, owned a powerfully built body and strong, stubborn, superior intellect. His father and grandfather saw service in the British Army. The accumulated bitterness against Hindus that rankled for centuries in millions of Harijan breasts found expression in Ambedkar's Himalayan hatred. He preferred British raj to Hindu raj; he preferred Moslems to Hindus and once thought of leading the untouchable community, as a body, into the Mohammedan Church. Age-long Hindu cruelty to his unhappy brethren filled him with anger, spite and vindictiveness. If anybody in India could have contemplated with equanimity the death of Gandhi, Ambedkar was the man. He called the fast 'a political stunt'. At the conference, he faced the great Hindu minds, and he must have derived sweet pleasure watching them court him in order to save their beloved Mahatma.

Gandhi had always wanted one electorate for Hindus and Harijans, which would jointly elect a solid block of Hindu and Harijan members of the legislative councils. He even opposed reserving a fixed number of seats in that block for Harijans because it would accentuate the cleavage between the two communities. But on the 19th Gandhi told a deputation—much to its relief—that he had become reconciled to reserved seats.

Ambedkar, however, demurred: the Harijans who would occupy the reserved seats in the legislatures would be elected jointly by Hindus and Harijans and would, therefore, feel considerable restraint in airing Harijan grievances against Hindus. If a Harijan denounced Hindus too fiercely the Hindus might defeat him in the next election and elect a more docile untouchable.

To meet this legitimate objection, Sapru had evolved an ingenious plan which he presented to the conference on September 20th: all Hindu and Harijan members of the

legislatures would be elected jointly by Hindu and Harijan voters. A number of the Hindu-Harijan seats would be earmarked in advance for Harijans. The candidates for a portion of these reserved Harijan seats would be nominated in private consultations between Hindus and Harijans. But for the remainder of the reserved seats, Sapru introduced something new: primaries in which only Harijans would vote. In those primary elections, a panel of three Harijan candidates would be chosen for each reserved seat. Then in the final or secondary elections, Harijans and Hindus would vote jointly for one of those three Harijan candidates. The Hindus would have no choice but to vote for one of them. That would enable the Harijans to place their bravest and best champions in the legislatures while retaining the system of joint electorates.

Anxiously, the Hindus waited for Ambedkar's views on the scheme. He examined it minutely. He sought the advice of friends. Hours drifted by. Finally he accepted, but stated that he would draft his own formula to incorporate his own ideas plus the Sapru plan.

Encouraged, but still not quite sure of Ambedkar, the Hindu leaders now wondered about Gandhi; would he sanction the Sapru innovation? Sapru, Jayakar, Rajagopalachari, Devadas, Birla and Prasad took the midnight train and were in Poona the next morning. At 7 a.m. they were taken into the prison office. Gandhi, already weak after less than twenty-four hours without food, came into the office with a laugh, and taking a place at the centre of the table, announced cheerfully, 'I preside'.

Sapru explained the plan of the primaries. Others amplified. Gandhi asked some questions. He was non-committal. Half an hour passed. Finally Gandhi said, 'I am prepared to consider your plan favourably . . . But I

should like to have the whole picture before me in writing.' In addition, he asked to see Ambedkar and Rajah.

Urgent invitations were sent to Ambedkar and Rajah. A memorandum on the Sapru plan was prepared. Rajah, representing Gandhi's untouchables following, accepted it. Ambedkar promised to come.

A troubled night passed. In the morning of the 22nd Gandhi expressed displeasure with the scheme: Why should only some candidates for the reserved Harijan seats be elected in the Harijan primaries? Why not all? Why create two sets of Harijan candidates, one chosen by Harijans in the primaries, the other selected by Hindus and Harijans? He wanted no distinctions between Harijans. Nor did he want Harijan legislators to be under any political debt to Hindus.

The negotiators were overjoyed. Gandhi was offering Ambedkar more than Ambedkar had already accepted.

Ambedkar appeared at Gandhi's cot late that afternoon; he did most of the talking. He was ready to help to save the Mahatma's life, he said. But 'I want my compensation'.

Gandhi had already commenced to sink. In previous fasts he had taken water regularly, on the hour. Now he was listless and drank it irregularly. In previous fasts, massage moderated his aches. This time he refused massage. Sharp pains racked his wasting body. He had to be moved to the bath on a stretcher. The least movement, sometimes even speaking, gave him nausea.

When Ambedkar said, 'I want my compensation,' Gandhi propped himself up painfully and spoke for many minutes. He mentioned his devotion to the Harijans. He discussed the Sapru scheme point by point. He did not like it, he said. All Harijans should be nominated by Harijans and not just some of them, Gandhi declared.

Weakened by the effort, the Mahatma subsided to his pillow.

Ambedkar had expected to be put under pressure in the presence of the dying Mahatma to receede from his position. But now Gandhi out-Harijaned the Harijan Ambedkar.

Ambedkar welcomed Gandhi's amendment.

That day, Mrs. Gandhi arrived; she had been transferred from Sabarmati Prison to Yeravda. As she slowly moved towards her husband, she shook her head from side to side reprovingly and said, 'Again, the same story!' He smiled. Her presence cheered him. He submitted to massage by her, and by a professional, more for her sake than because he wanted it.

Friday, September 23rd, the fourth day of the fast, Dr. Gilder, Gandhi's heart specialist, and Dr. Patel came from Bombay, and in consultation with prison physicians diagnosed the prisoner's condition as dangerous. Blood pressure was alarmingly high. Death was possible at any moment.

The same day, Ambedkar conferred at length with the Hindu leaders and presented his new demands for compensation: MacDonald's award had given the Depressed Classes 71 seats in the provincial legislatures. Ambedkar asked for 197. Sapru had suggested a panel of three Harijan candidates. Gandhi suggested five; Ambedkar suggested two. There was also the question of a referendum of Harijan voters to decide when the reserved seats should be abolished and the political distinction thus wiped out between Hindus and Harijans; that would be a step towards the merger of the two communities in life. Gandhi wanted the primaries abolished after five years. Ambedkar held out for fifteen. Ambedkar did not believe that untouchability would be destroyed in five years.

Later in the day, Ambedkar came to Gandhi. It was a hot sultry day and not a mango leaf stirred in the prison yard. Gandhi's blood pressure was rising. He could hardly speak above a whisper. Ambedkar bargained hard. The outcome was indecisive.

Saturday, September 24th, the fifth day, Ambedkar renewed his talks with the Hindu leaders. After a morning's wrangling, he visited Gandhi at noon. It had been agreed between Ambedkar and the Hindus that the Depressed Classes would have 147 reserved seats instead of the 197 Ambedkar had demanded and the 71 MacDonald ordered. Gandhi accepted the compromise. Ambedkar was now ready to abolish the separate primaries after ten years. Gandhi insisted on five. 'Five years or my life,' Gandhi said. Ambedkar refused.

Ambedkar returned to his Harijan colleagues. Later, he informed the Hindu leaders that he would not accept the abolition of primaries in five years: nothing less than ten.

Rajagopalachari now did something which probably saved Gandhi's life. Without consulting Gandhi, he and Ambedkar agreed that the time of the abolition of the primaries would be determined in further discussion. This might make a referendum superfluous.

Rajagopalachari rushed to the jail and explained the new arrangement to Gandhi.

'Will you repeat it?'

Rajagopalachari repeated it.

'Excellent,' Gandhi murmured; he may not have understood precisely what Rajagopalachari was saying; he was faint. But he had acquiesced.

That Saturday, the Yeravda Pact, as Indian history knows it, was drafted and signed by all the chief Hindu and Harijan negotiators except Gandhi.

On Sunday it was ratified in Bombay at a full conference of the negotiators and others.

But the pact was no pact and Gandhi would not abandon his fast unless the British government consented to substitute it for the MacDonald Award. Its verbatim text had been telegraphed to London where Charles Andrews, Polak and other friends of Gandhi laboured to get quick action from the Government. It was Sunday and ministers had left town, and Ramsay MacDonald was in Sussex attending a funeral.

On hearing of the agreement in Poona, MacDonald hurried back to 10 Downing Street; so did Sir Samuel Hoare and Lord Lothian who had helped to formulate the MacDonald Award. They poured over the text until midnight on Sunday.

Gandhi's life was fast ebbing away. He told Kasturbai who should get the few personal belongings that lay around his cot. Early Monday, Tagore arrived from Calcutta and sang a selection of his own songs to the Mahatma. They soothed Gandhi. Friends from Poona were admitted to play on musical instruments and chant devotional hymns. He thanked them with a nod and a faint smile. He could not speak.

A few hours later, the British government announced simultaneously in London and New Delhi that it had approved the Yeravda Pact. Gandhi could break his fast.

At 5-15 on Monday afternoon, in the presence of Tagore, Patel, Mahadev Desai, Mrs. Naidu, the negotiators and journalists, Gandhi accepted a glass of orange juice from Kasturbai and broke his fast. Tagore sang Bengali hymns. Many eyes were wet.

Dr. Ambedkar made an interesting speech at the Bombay conference on Sunday, September 25th, which ratified the Yeravda Pact or Poona Agreement. Praising Gandhi's

conciliatory attitude, Ambedkar said, 'I must confess that I was surprised, immensely surprised, when I met him, that there was so much in common between him and me. In fact whenever any disputes were carried to him—and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru has told you that the disputes that were carried to him were of a very crucial character—I was astounded to see that the man who held such divergent views from mine at the Round Table Conference came immediately to my rescue and not to the rescue of the other side. I am very grateful to Mamatmaji for having extricated me from what might have been a very difficult situation.'

This was not only a polite tribute at a moment of relaxation after hectic days, but also a correct description of Gandhi's attitude. Gandhi did favour the Harijan position over the Hindu position. Indeed, Gandhi had gone so far in his desire to meet the Harijans 100 per cent. of the way, that he reversed himself on the key issue of reserved seats. 'My only regret is,' Dr. Ambedkar stated in that same speech, 'why did not Mahatmaji take this attitude at the Round Table Conference? If he had shown the same consideration for my point of view then, it would not have been necessary for him to go through this ordeal. However,' he added generously, 'these are things of the past. I am glad that I am here now to support this resolution' of ratification.

At the Round Table Conference in September-December 1931, Gandhi had opposed Harijan reserved seats in the Hindu block because it divided the two communities. But on September 13th, 1932, and again on the 19th, Gandhi had accepted the idea of reserved seats as an unavoidable and, he hoped, passing evil. He accepted the reservation of seats as something infinitely preferable to the segregation that would arise out of the separate electorate which

MacDonald wanted to introduce. But if Gandhi had done so at the Round Table Conference or months before the fast he might not have carried the orthodox Hindus with him. One of the negotiators of the Poona Agreement subsequently told me that he had always opposed Gandhi's policies, but Gandhi was God descended to earth and 'the gates of Heaven were waiting to receive him'. The threat of the Mahatma's death won over the Hindu leaders for Gandhi's policies.

Suppose, however, that the Hindu leaders had adopted reservation of seats before the fast. Would the fast have been superfluous? Was the Mahatma's torment unnecessary?

The answer to this question is crucial to an understanding of Gandhi's role in India's history. By the criterion of cold logic and arid legalisms, Gandhi need not have fasted to reach an agreement with Ambedkar. But Gandhi's relationship with the Indian people was not based on logic and legalism. It was a highly emotional relationship. For the Hindus, Gandhi was Mahatma, The Great Soul, a piece of God. Were they going to kill him? The moment the fast began, texts, constitutions, awards, elections, etc., lost their significance. Gandhi's life had to be saved.

From September 13th, when the fast was announced, to the afternoon of September 26th, when Gandhi drank his first orange juice, every change in Gandhi's physical condition, every word pronounced by anyone who had seen him, every journey of the least of the negotiators was broadcast to every corner of the country. A mother hovering over the crib of a tender child during a high-temperature crisis could be no more anxious than India that watched the white cot of the sinking Mahatma. No mystic himself, Gandhi affected others mystically. They became one with him, as one as mother and babe. Reason

withdrew; passionately, frantically, because the end might have come at any instant, Hindus were reacting to a single throbbing wish: The Mahatma must not die.

Gandhi had made each Hindu personally responsible for his life. On September 15th, in a statement widely disseminated, Gandhi said, 'No patched-up agreement between Caste Hindus and rival Depressed class leaders will answer the purpose. The agreement to be valid has to be real. If the Hindu mass mind is not yet prepared to banish untouchability root and branch it must sacrifice me without the slightest hesitation.'

While the negotiators parleyed, therefore, the Hindu community — close to a quarter of a billion persons — experienced a religious-emotional upheaval. At the very beginning of the fast week, the famous Kalighat Temple of Calcutta and the Ram Mandir of Banares, citadel of Hindu orthodoxy, were thrown open to untouchables. In Delhi, Caste Hindus and Harijans demonstratively fraternized in streets and temples. In Bombay, a nationalist women's organization organized a poll in front of seven big temples. Ballot boxes, watched by volunteers, were placed outside the gates, and worshippers were asked to cast their votes on the admission of untouchables. The tally was 24,797 for, 445 against. As a result, temples in which no Harijan foot had ever trod were opened to all.

The day before the fast started, twelve temples in Allahabad were made accessible to Harijans for the first time; on the first day of the fast, some of the most sacred temples throughout the country opened their doors to untouchables. Every subsequent day, until September 26th, and then every day from the 27th to October 2nd, Gandhi's birthday, which was Anti-Untouchability Week, scores of holy places lowered the bars against Harijans. All temples in the native states of Baroda, Kashmir, Bhor and

Kolhapur cancelled temple discrimination. The newspapers printed the names of the hundreds of temples that lifted the ban under the impact of Gandhi's fast.

Mrs. Swarup Rani Nehru, Jawaharlal's very orthodox mother, let it be known that she had accepted food from the hand of an untouchable. Thousands of prominent Hindu women followed her example. At the strictly Hindu Banares University, Principal Dhruva, with numerous Brahmans, dined publicly with street cleaners, cobblers and scavengers. Similar meals were arranged in hundreds of other places.

In villages, small towns and big cities, congregations, organizations, citizens' unions, etc., adopted resolutions promising to stop discriminating against untouchables; copies of these resolutions formed a man-high heap in Gandhi's prison yard.

Villages and small towns allowed untouchables to use water wells. Hindu pupils shared benches formerly reserved for untouchables. Roads and streets, from which they were previously excluded, were opened to Harijans.

A spirit of reform, penance and self-purification swept the land. During the six fast days, most Hindus refrained from going to cinemas, theatres, or restaurants. Weddings were postponed.

A cold political agreement between Gandhi and Ambedkar, without a fast, would have had no such effect on the nation; it might have redressed a legal Harijan grievance, but it would have remained a dead letter as far as the Hindu's personal treatment of untouchables was concerned. Most Hindus would never have heard of it. The political pact was important only after the emotional churning which Gandhiji's fast gave the country.

The fast could not kill the curse of untouchability, which

was more than three thousand years old. Access to a temple is not access to a good job. The Harijans remained the dregs of Indian society. Nor did segregation end when Gandhi slowly drank his orange juice.

But after the fast, untouchability forfeited its public approval; the belief in it was destroyed. A practice deeply imbedded in a complicated religion full of mystic overtones and undercurrents was recognized as morally illegitimate. A taboo hallowed by custom, tradition and ritual lost its potency. It had been socially improper to consort with Harijans; in many circles now it became socially improper not to consort with them. To practise untouchability branded one a bigot, a reactionary. Before long, marriages were taking place between Harijans and Hindus; Gandhi made a point of attending some.

Gandhi's 'Epic Fast' snapped a long chain that stretched back into antiquity and had enslaved tens of millions. Some links of the chain remained. Many wounds from the chain remained. But nobody would forge new links, nobody would link the links together again. The future promised freedom.

The Yeravda Pact said, 'No one shall be regarded as untouchable by reason of his birth . . .' Orthodox Hindus, with large religious followings, signed that statement. It marked a religious reformation, a psychological revolution. Hinduism was purging itself of a millennial sickness. The mass purified itself in practice. It was good for India's moral health. The perpetuation of untouchability would have poisoned India's soul just as the retention of its economic remnants must hamper India's progress.

If Gandhi had done nothing else in his life but shatter the structure of untouchability he would have been a great social reformer. In retrospect, the wrestling with Ambedkar over seats, primaries and referendums seems like that

year's melted snow on the Himalayas. The real reform was religious and social, not political.

Five days after the end of the fast Gandhi's weight had gone up to ninety-nine and three-quarter pounds, and he was spinning and working for many hours. 'The fast was really nothing compared with the miseries that the outcasts have undergone for ages,' he wrote to Miss Slade. 'And so', he added, 'I continue to hum "God is great and merciful".'

He remained in prison.

Gandhi's fast touched Hindu India's heart. Gandhi had a compelling need to communicate with the hearts of men; he had an artist's genius for reaching the heart strings of the inner man. But how does one communicate with a hundred or two hundred or three hundred million persons most of whom are illiterate and only five thousand of whom have radios? Gandhi's fasts were means of communication. The news of the fast was printed in all papers. Those who read told those who did not read that 'The Mahatma is fasting'. The cities knew, and peasants marketing in the cities knew, and they carried the report to the villages, and travellers did likewise.

'Why is the Mahatma fasting?'

'So that we Hindus open our temples to the untouchables and treat the untouchables better.'

India's ear was listening for more news.

'The Mahatma is sinking.' 'The Mahatma is dying.' 'We must hurry.'

Gandhi's agony gave vicarious pain to his adorers who knew they must not kill God's messenger on earth. It was evil to prolong his suffering. It was blessed to save him by being good to those whom he had called 'The Children of God'.

CHAPTER VI

WITHOUT POLITICS

THE 'Epic Fast' enabled Gandhi to break through a thick, high wall into the immense neglected field of social reform. Many of his friends were unhappy because he allowed himself to be 'sidetracked' into welfare work for Harijans and peasants. Politicians wanted him to be political. But to Gandhi vitamins for villages were the best politics and Harijan happiness the highroad to independence.

Social reform was ever his favoured activity. 'I have always held', he declared on January 25th, 1942, in *Harijan*, 'that a parliamentary programme at all times is the least of a nation's activity. The most important and permanent work is done outside.' He wanted the individual to do more so that the State would do less. The more work at the bottom, the less dictation from the top.

Gandhi's revulsion against government was indeed so strong that he promised in the April 27th, 1940, *Harijan* not to participate in the government of free India. He would do his share, he said, 'outside the official world'. He was too religious to identify himself with any government.

This being Gandhi's philosophy, he depended for the success of his social reform work on special purpose voluntary organizations with many active members.

In February 1933, Gandhi, still in prison, had started the Harijan Sevak Sangh, a society to help Harijans, and *Harijan*, a new weekly which replaced *Young India*, suspended by the Government. On May 8th, he undertook a three weeks' fast for self-purification and to impress the ashram with the importance of service rather than indulgence; the presence of an attractive American woman visitor had caused some backsliding. On the first day of the

fast the Government released him. It seemed certain, after the physical agony of the seven days of the 'Epic Fast', that twenty-one days without food would kill him. And Britain did not want a dead Gandhi within prison walls.

He survived.

Why was the short fast almost fatal and the other, three times as long, easy to endure? During the former, he negotiated incessantly and was consumed by a desire to remove the taint of untouchability; his body burned simultaneously. In the twenty-one-day fast, spirit and mind were relaxed. His little body was the creature of a powerful will.

As a gesture of friendship to the Government for his release, Gandhi suspended for six weeks the civil disobedience campaign which had commenced in January 1933. On July 15th he asked Willingdon for an interview. The Viceroy declined. On August 1st, Gandhi proposed to march from Yeravda, where he had been residing, to the village of Ras. That night, he was arrested with thirty-four ashramites, but released three days later and ordered to remain in the city of Poona. Half an hour later, he disobeyed the order, and was arrested again and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. He commenced to fast on August 16th, was removed to hospital in a precarious condition on August 20th, and unconditionally released on the 23rd. He nevertheless regarded himself as serving the year's sentence and announced he would not resume civil disobedience before August 3rd, 1934.

Until 1939, except for a month's silence to catch up with his work and several long periods of physical breakdown, Gandhi was completely at the disposal of the organizations he had founded for mass welfare and education. He gave Sabarmati Ashram to a Harijan group and established headquarters in Wardha, a small town

in the Central Provinces. From there, on November 7th, 1933, he commenced a ten-month tour for Harijan welfare; he visited every province in India without once going home to relax or rest.

On January 15th, 1934, a large section of Bihar province suffered a severe earthquake. Gandhi interrupted his tour and visited the stricken area in March; he walked barefoot from village to village, comforting, teaching and preaching. The earthquake, he told the public, 'is a chastisement for your sins', chiefly 'the sin of untouchability'. Such superstition angered Tagore and other enlightened Indians; the poet denounced the Mahatma. '. . . physical catastrophes', Tagore declared in a statement to the press which he first sent to Gandhi, 'have their inevitable and exclusive origin in certain combinations of physical facts . . . If we associate ethical principles with cosmic phenomena then we shall have to admit that human nature is morally superior to the Providence that preaches lessons in good behaviour in orgies of the worst behaviour possible . . . As for us, we feel perfectly secure in the faith that our sins and errors, however enormous, have not enough force to drag down the structure of creation to ruins . . . We who are immensely grateful to Mahatmaji for inducing by his wonder-working inspiration a freedom from fear and feebleness in the minds of his countrymen, feel profoundly hurt when any words from his mouth may emphasize the elements of unreason in those very minds. . . .'

Gandhi was not shaken. 'There is an indissoluble marriage', he replied, 'between matter and spirit . . . The connection between cosmic phenomena and human behaviour is a living faith and draws me nearer to God.' The moment Gandhi invoked God there was no arguing with him. In effect, the overzealous Mahatma was

harnessing God to his propaganda chariot; he was Arjuna using Krishna as charioteer to fight for the common people.

Gandhi's paramount compulsion was to help the poor, and since Gandhi and Gandhi's God were partners, the Mahatma enlisted the Almighty in the task. 'To a people famishing and idle', he wrote, 'the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food and wages.'

'India lives in her villages, not in her cities,' he wrote in *Harijan* on August 26th, 1936; and several issues later, 'When I succeed in ridding the villages of their poverty, I have won Swaraj . . .' The idea that Gandhi favoured poverty is fiction; he merely urged select idealists to serve the people through self-abnegation. For the nation as a whole, 'No one has ever suggested that grinding pauperism can lead to anything else than moral degradation,' which is the last thing he wanted. Gandhi insisted that 'If we do not waste our wealth and energy, the climate and natural resources of our country are such that we can become the happiest people in the world,' which is what he did want.

Gandhi decried the extreme of pauperism and the extreme of wealth.

Between 1933 and 1939, Gandhi allowed few matters to deflect him from welfare work. It was not smooth sailing. On June 25th, 1935, at Poona, in the heart of the late Tilak's Maratha country, a Hindu suspected of opposing equality for Harijans threw a bomb into a car thinking mistakenly that the Mahatma was in it. Shortly thereafter, a Gandhi supporter belaboured an anti-Harijan with a lathi. Gandhi fasted seven days in July 1934 to do penance for both.

On October 26th, 1934, the All-India Village Industries Association was launched with Gandhi as patron and Gandhi's millionaire industrialist friends as backers.

At village meetings and in *Harijan*, Gandhi was now giving the farming population rudimentary instruction about food. 'Milk and banana make a perfect meal,' he wrote. *Harijan* of February 15th, 1935, contained an article by Gandhi entitled 'Green Leaves and their Food Value' in which he reported, 'For nearly five months I have been living on uncooked foods. The addition of green leaves to their meals will enable villagers to avoid many diseases from which they are now suffering.' He devoted another article to the debate on 'Cow's Milk versus Buffalo's', and still a third to the supreme Indian problem: rice. In his booklet, *Key to Health,* and elsewhere, Gandhi gave warning against machine-polished rice. Polishing removes an overcoat rich in vitamins, especially B1, he explained; lacking those vitamins, Indians, for most of whom rice is the chief staple food, are subject to numerous debilitating diseases, notably beriberi which means 'I cannot'. Hand-pounded rice, Gandhi explained, retains the vitamin-rich coating.

At other times, Gandhi expatiated on the nutritional value of the mango kernel and the groundnut or peanut. Peanuts were politics to him, as political as primaries. Repeatedly, too, he gave detailed information on how to prepare animal manures and how to cure snake bites and malaria.

Gandhi knew that the improvement of seed, the proper use of fertilizer and the proper care of cattle could solve basic political problems. Many a civil war in Asia might have been prevented by an additional daily bowl of rice per person.

Gandhi also paid attention to non-agrarian aspects of village life. 'We have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use,' he wrote in *Harijan* on August 29th, 1936. 'Provided this character

of village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploiting of others.'

In *Harijan* of July 26th, 1942, Gandhi described the ideal Indian village: 'It is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants, and yet interdependent for many other wants in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow *useful* money crops, thus excluding . . . tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own water works ensuring clean supply. This can be done through controlled wells and tanks [reservoirs]. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible, every activity will be conducted on a co-operative basis . . .' To this modest blueprint, which, however, seemed like a sketch of Heaven to India's permanently underfed farmers, Gandhi added another wild dream: electricity in every village home.

Did Gandhi advocate a land reform for India which would give landless or land-poor peasants the redistributed estates of the big landlords?

In the January 2nd, 1937, issue of *Harijan*, Gandhi wrote, 'Land and all property is his who will work it'; but he admitted the landlords into that category though he knew that the landlord class included a large percentage of absentee owners, intermediaries, agents, moneylenders and other unproductive elements.

'I cannot picture to myself a time when no man shall be richer than another,' Gandhi said. 'Even in the most

perfect world, we shall fail to avoid inequalities, but we can and must avoid strife and bitterness. There are numerous examples extant of the rich and the poor living in perfect friendliness. We have but to multiply such instances.'

Gandhi would have done it by 'trusteeship'.

In Bengal once, Gandhi was the guest of a landlord who served him milk in a gold bowl and fruit on gold plates.

'Where did he get these golden plates from?' Gandhi said to himself.

'From the substance of the peasants,' Gandhi answered. 'Where their life is one long-drawn-out agony, how dare he have these luxuries?'

Gandhi spared his host, but he shared these thoughts with a meeting of landlords in 1931 and added, 'Landlords would do well to take time by the forelock. Let them cease to be mere rent collectors. They should become trustees and trusted friends of their tenants . . . They should give the peasants fixity of tenure, take a lively interest in their welfare, provide well-managed schools for their children, night schools for adults, hospitals and dispensaries for the sick, look after the sanitation of the villages, and in a variety of ways make them feel that they, the landlords, are their true friends taking only a fixed commission for their manifold services.'

'Exploitation of their poor can be extinguished,' Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* on July 28th, 1940, 'not by effecting the destruction of a few millionaires, but by removing the ignorance of the poor and teaching them to non-co-operate with their exploiters. That will convert the exploiters also.'

Gandhi reminded the peasants and workers of their power. 'There is in English a very-potent word, and you have it in French also,' he said. 'All the languages of the world have it—it is "No" . . . Immediately Labour

comes to recognize that it has got the choice of saying "Yes" when it wants to say "Yes", and "No" when it wants to say "No", Labour is free of Capital, and Capital must woo Labour.' The worker can strike; the peasant can refuse rent.

Nevertheless, he declared in *Young India* of October 7th, 1926, 'capital and labour need not be antagonistic to each other'.

But the passage of time and all Gandhi's persuasiveness produced few trustees. No report of 'voluntary abdication' by a landlord or millowner reached Gandhi before the day of his death. No one answered his 1929 appeal to the 'model landlord' to 'reduce himself to poverty in order that the peasant may have the necessities of life'.

Gradually, therefore, Gandhi's economic views changed. He continued to advocate class collaboration. But as he moved nearer the end of his life and further from the nineteenth century, he sought new means of removing poverty. He became reconciled to more state participation in economic affairs. He wanted the law to help in the levelling process. Equality grew more attractive.

In *Harijan* of July 31st, 1937, Gandhi noted that British income surtaxes amounted to 70 per cent. 'There is no reason why India should not go to a much higher figure.' And, he added, 'Why should there not be death duties?' In an article published April 13th, 1938, he went still further: 'A trustee has no heir but the public.' The millionaire's wealth should go to the community, not to his son who would only lose morally by inheriting material riches, Gandhi declared.

One of the first acts of a free India would be to give grants to the untouchables, he said, out of the pockets of 'the moneyed classes'. And if the rich complain, 'I shall sympathize with them, but I will not be able to help them,

even if I could possibly do so, because I would seek their assistance in that process, and without their assistance it would not be possible to raise these people out of the mire.'

In 1941, and again in 1945 in his *Constructive Programme,* Gandhi warned the Indian capitalists. 'A non-violent system of government', he wrote, 'is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give, and sharing them for the common good.'

The response was nil.

'The power that riches give' troubled him. He began to search for means of diffusing it. 'Key industries, industries which the state needs', he wrote on June 28th, 1939, 'may be centralized.' He was opposed, however, to concentration of economic power in the hands of the Government. He therefore added, 'But supposing the state controlled paper-making and centralized it, I would expect it to protect all the paper that villages can make.' Power houses, he wrote, should be owned 'by village communities or the state', preferably by the villages.

'What would happen in a free India?' I asked Gandhi in 1942. 'What is your programme for the improvement of the lot of the peasantry?'

'The peasants would take the land,' he replied. 'We would not have to tell them to take it. They would take it.'

'Would the landlords be compensated?' I asked.

'No,' Gandhi said. 'That would be fiscally impossible.'

An interviewer told Gandhi that the number of textile

mills was increasing. 'That is a misfortune,' he remarked. Better that textiles be made in the homes of the millions of partially employed peasants.

'God forbid', Gandhi exclaimed in *Harijan* on January 28th, 1939, 'that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom [England] is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of three hundred millions took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.'

Nor did Gandhi regard the mere multiplication of material wants and of objects to gratify them as the high-road to happiness or godliness. He drew no line between economics and ethics. 'An economics', he said in *Harijan* of October 9th, 1937, 'that inculcates Mammon worship, that enables the strong to amass wealth at the expenses of the weak, is a false and dismal science. It spells death. True economics . . . stands for social justice' and moral values. Gandhi knew that people with full refrigerators, crowded clothes closets, cars in every garage and radios in every room may still be psychologically insecure and unhappy. 'Rome,' he said, 'suffered a moral fall when it attained high material affluence.' 'What shall it avail a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?' Gandhi quoted. 'In modern terms,' he continued, 'it is beneath human dignity to lose one's individuality and become a mere cog in the machine. I want every individual to become a full-blooded, fully developed member of society.' Next to God, Gandhi's supreme being was man the individual. He accordingly regarded himself as 'the born democrat'.

'No society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom. It is contrary to the very nature of man,' Gandhi wrote. 'Just as man will not grow horns or

a tail so he will not exist as a man if he has no mind of his own.' Therefore, 'democracy is not a state in which people act like sheep'.

Gandhi disliked the word 'tolerance' but he found no substitute. 'For me,' he said, 'every ruler is alien who defies public opinion . . . Intolerance betrays want of faith in one's cause . . . We shut the door of reason when we refuse to listen to our opponents or, having listened, make fun of them.

'Always keep an open mind,' he admonished.

There could, however, be no democracy without discipline. 'I value individual freedom,' he wrote, 'but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to his present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We must learn to strike a mean between individual freedom and social restraint.' It could be done by self-discipline. If the individual did not discipline himself the state would try to discipline the individual, and too much official discipline kills democracy.

'We cannot learn discipline by compulsion,' Gandhi affirmed. A dictatorship can exact obedience; it can implant the habit of robot compliance; it can, by fear, convert man into a cringing, kowtowing pigmy. None of that is discipline.

Gandhi discouraged the notion that democracy meant economic freedom at the expense of personal liberty, or political freedom without economic freedom. 'My conception of freedom is no narrow conception,' he declared in *Harijan* of June 7th, 1942. 'It is coextensive with the freedom of man in all his majesty.

'If the individual ceases to count, what is left of society?' he asked. To those who argued that dictatorships reduce

illiteracy, he replied, 'Where a choice has to be made between liberty and learning, who will not say that the former has to be preferred a thousand times to the latter?'

Democracy means majority rule, Gandhi agreed. But, 'In matters of conscience,' he said, 'the law of majority has no place; . . . it is slavery to be amenable to the majority no matter what its decisions are.'

Nor was freedom Gandhi's highest law. 'Not even for the freedom of India would I resort to an untruth,' he said. 'We do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin.'

Gandhi's hostility to violence and untruth, his objection to the omnipotent State which embodies both, and his economic ideas made him anti-Communist.

'India does not want Communism,' Gandhi said as early as November 24th, 1921.

'All Communists are not bad, as all Congressmen are not angels,' Gandhi declared on January 26th, 1941. 'I have, therefore, no prejudice against Communists as such. Their philosophy, as they have declared it to me, I cannot subscribe to.'

The Communists sent spokesmen to convert him. But his instincts led him to reject their teachings.

'I am yet ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is, he wrote on December 11th, 1924. 'I have not been able to study it. I do not know whether it is for the good of Russia in the long run. But I do know that in so far as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me . . . I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes.'

In 1926, he received some enlightenment and declared. 'Let no one think that the people in Russia, Italy and other countries are happy or are independent.'

In 1927, Shapuri Saklatwala, an Indian Communist who

was a member of the British House of Commons, appealed to Gandhi to forsake his mistaken ways and join the Communists. Gandhi replied to the 'impatient comrade' in *Young India* of March 17th, 1927. 'In spite of my desire to offer hearty co-operation,' the Mahatma said, 'I find myself against a blind wall. His facts are fiction and his deductions based upon fiction are necessarily baseless . . . I am sorry, but we stand at opposite poles.'

Communists accused him of consorting with capitalists and taking their money. He did not reply that Communists were tarred with the same brush. He said he took money from the rich to help the poor. He consorted with capitalists to convert them. He consorted with Communists as often as they wished to come.

'You claim to be Communists,' he said to one group of Communists, 'but you do not seem to live the life of Communism.' Then he berated them for their discourtesy in debate. On another occasion, he attacked their lack of scruples. 'I have it from some of the literature that passes under the name of Communist literature,' he wrote in *Harijan* on December 10th, 1930, 'that secrecy, camouflage, and the like are enjoined as necessary for the accomplishment of the Communist.' This repelled him.

Was Gandhi a Socialist?

The Communists call themselves Socialists. The full name of Hitler's Nazi party was National Socialist Workers' Party, and Mussolini spoke of his regime as 'proletarian'. The French Radical Socialists are mild and middle class. Socialism is an overworked word.

Gandhi read Karl Marx's *Capital* in prison and remarked, 'I think I could have written it better, assuming, of course, that I had the leisure for the study he has put in.' If Gandhi meant the style he was certainly right. But Gandhi was no Marxist; he did not believe in class war.

Minoo Masani, Indian author and India's first Ambassador to Brazil, asked Gandhi's opinion of the programme of the Indian Socialist Party. Gandhi replied in a letter dated June 14th, 1934. 'I welcome the rise of the Socialist Party in the Congress,' the Mahatma wrote. 'But I can't say I like the programme as it appears in the printed pamphlet. It seems to me to ignore Indian conditions and I do not like the assumption underlying many of its propositions which go to show that there is necessarily antagonism between the classes and the masses or between the labourers and capitalists, such that they can never work for mutual good. My own experience covering a fairly long period is to the contrary. What is necessary is that labourers or workers should know their rights and should also know how to assert them. And since there never has been any right without a corresponding duty, in my opinion, a manifesto is incomplete without emphasizing the necessity of performance of duty and showing what duty is.' He invited Masani and friends for a discussion.

Gandhi opposed the Socialists for their class-war doctrine, and he condemned them when they used violence. Yet as he observed disturbing trends, he became more pro-Socialist and more favourably disposed to equality. 'Today', Gandhi wrote in the June 1st, 1947, *Harijan*, 'there is gross economic inequality. The basis of Socialism is economic equality. There can be no rule of God in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get enough to eat. I accepted the theory of Socialism even while I was in South Africa.' His, however, was a moral Socialism.

If India were to carry out most of Gandhi's numerous economic prescriptions the result, two or three decades after his death, might be an economy pivoting on a fully employed, self-governing village enjoying maximum self-

sufficiency and minimum mechanization; a city where capitalists and municipal, provincial and federal governments shared industry and trade; strong trade unions and co-operatives; and one-generation capitalists whose wealth, since they could not bequeath it, would revert to the community.

Gandhi's loyalty to truth exceeded his loyalty to political dogma or party. He allowed truth to lead him without a map. If it took him into an area where he had to discard some intellectual baggage or walk alone without past associates, he went. He never impeded his mind with STOP signs. Many groups have claimed him. But he was the private property of none, not even of Congress. He was its leader for years, yet at the Congress convention in Bombay in December 1934, having immersed himself in Harijan and peasant uplift work, he ceased to be a dues-paying member, let alone an officer, of the Congress party. 'I need complete detachment and absolute freedom of action,' he said.

Gandhi's individualism meant maximum freedom from outward circumstances and maximum development of inner qualities. His antagonism to British rule was part of a larger antagonism to fetters of all kinds. His goal was *Gita* detachment, in politics as in religion.

Gandhi's intellectual receptivity and flexibility are characteristics of the Hindu mind. There is a Hindu orthodoxy but it is not characteristic of Hinduism. In Hinduism it is the intensity and quality of the religious zeal, not so much its object, which constitutes religion.

In 1942, when I was Gandhi's house guest for a week, there was only one decoration on the mud walls of his hut: a black and white print of Jesus Christ with the inscription, 'He Is Our Peace.' I asked Gandhi about it. 'I am a Christian,' he replied. 'I am a Christian, and a Hindu, and a Moslem, and a Jew.'

'All faiths', Gandhi wrote in *From Yeravda Mandir* in an unintended definition of religious tolerance, 'constitute a revelation of Truth, but all are imperfect, and liable to error. Reverence for other faiths need not blind us to their faults. We must be keenly alive to the defects of our own faith also, yet not leave it on that account, but try to overcome those defects. Looking at all religions with an equal eye, we would not only not hesitate, but would think it our duty to blend into our faith every acceptable feature of other faiths.'

That paragraph is a portrait of the Gandhi mind: he was the conservative who would not change his religion, the reformer who tried to alter it, and the tolerant believer who regarded all faiths as aspects of the divine. He was loyal yet critical, partisan yet open-minded, devout yet not doctrinaire, inside yet outside, attached yet detached: Hindu yet Christian, yet Moslem, yet Jew.

Next to Hinduism he was most attracted by Christianity. He loved Jesus. Hindu bigots even accused him of being a secret Christian. He considered this 'both a libel and a compliment—a libel because there are men who believe me to be capable of being secretly anything . . . a compliment in that it is a reluctant acknowledgment of my capacity for appreciating the beauties of Christianity. Let me own this. If I could call myself, say, a Christian or a Moslem, with my own interpretation of the Bible or the *Koran*, I could not hesitate to call myself either. For then Hindu, Christian and Moslem would be synonymous terms. I do believe that in the other world there are neither Hindus, nor Christians or Moslems.'

Gandhi was more specific, however, in an address at the Y.M.C.A. in Colombo, Ceylon, in 1927. 'If then,' he said, 'I had to face only the Sermon on the Mount and my own interpretation of it, I should not hesitate to say, "Oh, yes,

I am a Christian.'' . . . But negatively I can tell you that much of what passes as Christianity is a negation of the Sermon on the Mount. And please mark my words. I am not at the present moment speaking of the Christian conduct. I am speaking of the Christian belief, of Christianity as it is understood in the West.'

Many Christian missionaries came to Ghandhi often, and he had long friendly talks with Dr. John R. Mott, Bishop Fisher who lived in India for years, and others. But Gandhi frowned on proselytizing, whether by Christians, Hindus, or Moslems. He said, 'I do not believe in people telling others of their faith, especially with a view to conversion . . . Faith does not permit of telling. It has to be lived and then it is self-propagating.'

S. K. George, a Syrian Christian of India and lecturer at Bishop's College, Calcutta, wrote a book entitled, *Gandhi's Challenge to Christianity* and dedicated it 'To Mahatma Gandhi who made Jesus and His Message real to Me.' The Reverend K. Mathew Simon, of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Malabar, India, writes of Gandhi, 'It was his life that proved to me more than anything else that Christianity is a practicable religion even in the twentieth century.' This suggests how relevant Gandhi is to the problems of our times.

Gandhi presented a perplexing problem to Christians in India: he was the world's most Christ-like person yet not a Christian. 'And so,' exclaims E. Stanley Jones, 'one of the most Christlike men in history was not called a Christian at all.' Missionaries frequently tried to convert him to Christianity. (He, speaking softly, tried to do the same for them.) But why enrol a saint in a church?

Gandhi protested that the missionaries fed the starving and healed the sick in order to convert them to Christianity.

'Make us better Hindus,' he pleaded. That would be more Christian.

Christianity has had a good effect on Hinduism. 'The indirect influence of Christianity has been to quicken Hinduism into life,' Gandhi asserted. The fact that the missionaries' richest recruiting field was the embittered Harijan community may have awakened some Hindus to the necessity of supporting Gandhi's Harijan work. And Gandhi probably had a good effect on Christianity. Dr. E. Stanley Jones says, 'God uses many instruments, and he may have used Mahatma Gandhi to help Christianize unchristian Christianity.'

Gandhi never tried to convert Christians to Hinduism.

Although Gandhi was a Hindu reformer and welcomed the play of outside influences on Hinduism, he departed from Hindu customs and beliefs with reluctance. In 1927, Devadas fell in love with Lakshmi, the daughter of Rajagopalachari, and wanted to marry her. But Rajagopalachari was a Brahman and Gandhi a Vaisya, and members of different castes should not marry. Nor should young folks choose their mates; marriages are arranged by parents. But the man and maid persisted, and finally the illustrious fathers agreed to sanction the union if the couple still wanted one another after five years of separation. So Devadas, who was born in 1900, and Lakshmi waited five painful years and married with pomp in Poona on June 16th, 1933, in the presence of both happy fathers. Gandhi's wedding gift was a hymn book and garland of yarn which he had spun.

The conservative traditionalist and the radical iconoclast merged in Gandhi into a tantalizing unpredictable mixture. The Mahatma's successful assault on untouchability produced the most revolutionary change in Hinduism's millennial existence. It would seem that the corollary of

the abolition of untouchability was the abolition of caste, for if one mingled with outcasts surely the barriers between the higher castes should crumble. Yet for many years Gandhi defended caste restrictions.

Defending the four Hindu castes, Gandhi said in 1920, 'I consider the four divisions to be fundamental, natural and essential.' 'Hinduism', he wrote in *Young India* of October 6th, 1921, 'does most emphatically discourage interdining and intermarriage between divisions . . . Prohibition against intermarriage and interdining is essential for the rapid evolution of the soul.'

The same man said, 'Restriction on intercaste dining and intercaste marriage is no part of the Hindu religion. It crept into Hinduism when perhaps it was in its decline, and was then probably meant to be a temporary protection against the disintegration of Hindu society. Today those two prohibitions are weakening Hindu society.' This was on November 4th, 1932.

In 1921, the prohibition of intermarriage and interdining was 'essential' to the soul; in 1932, it was 'weakening Hindu society'.

Even this, however, was not Gandhi's final position. Having broken with the orthodox tradition, he characteristically continued to travel further and further away from it, and on January 5th, 1946, he declared, in the *Hindustan Standard*, 'I therefore tell all boys and girls who want to marry that they cannot be married at Sevagram Ashram unless one of the parties is a Harijan.' Earlier, he had refused to attend a wedding unless it was an intercaste marriage.

From 1921 to 1946 Gandhi had gone full circle: from utter disapproval of intercaste marriages to approval of only intercaste marriages.

He had opposed marriages between religions. But he

came to favour those too. He congratulated Dr. Humayun Kabir, a Moslem writer, on taking Hindu wife, and approved of B. K. Nehru's marrying a Hungarian Jewess.

Caste is as deeply ingrained in India as the family is in the Western world. Yet Gandhi could change his views on it. In later years, his ideas on celibacy also moderated. In 1935, Professor J. B. Kripalani, a disciple of Gandhi who had first met the Mahatma at Shantiniketan in 1915 and again in Champaran in 1917, fell in love with a Bengali girl and wanted to marry her. Gandhi summoned the girl, Sucheta, and tried to dissuade her. 'Marriage will ruin him,' he said. It would weaken his concentration on social problems. Gandhi advised her to marry somebody else.

A year later, however, Gandhi called Sucheta and gave his approval to the marriage. 'I shall pray for both of you,' he said. Subsequently, he treated her as a daughter.

In the ashram, too, Gandhi became more tolerant of marriage and stopped insisting that marriages be sexless.

As a crusader, Gandhi had to be positive about his opinions. As a devotee of the truth, he had to be able to change them. He sometimes defended his position with a persistence that seemed immodest; yet he also altered it, when necessary, with a completeness that embarrassed his followers but never him. Though he usually tried to prove his consistency, he admitted his inconsistencies. He could be adamant and softly yielding. He dictated to Congress in one period and left it to its fate and follies in another. Tremendous power was at his command but it often remained unused; in very crucial issues he bowed to the wishes of opponents whom he could have broken with a crook of a finger. He had the might of a dictator and the mind of a democrat. Power gave him no pleasure; he had no distorted psychology to feed. The result was a relaxed man. The problem of maintaining an impression of omniscience, in-

fallibility, omnipotence and dignity never occupied him.

Part of every leader's equipment is a wall. It may be high and made of brick and a battalion of guards or it may consist of an unanswered question and an enigmatic smile. Its purpose is to lend distance and awe and to obscure frailties and secrets. There was no wall around Gandhi. 'I say without the least hesitation,' he once declared, 'that I have never had recourse to cunning in all my life.' His mind and emotions were even more exposed than his body.

'My darkest hour', Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* of December 26th, 1936, at the age of sixty-seven, 'was when I was in Bombay a few months ago. It was the hour of my temptation. Whilst I was asleep I suddenly felt as though I wanted to see a woman. Well a man who had tried to rise superior to the instinct for nearly forty years was bound to be intensely pained when he had this frightful experience. I ultimately conquered the feeling, but I was face to face with the blackest moment of my life and if I had succumbed to it, it would have meant my absolute undoing.' Most people are incapable of such nudity and many would think it unnecessary. But it is the supreme manifestation of life without a wall. He wanted the world to know him, all of him; less than that would not have been the truth. And he told the truth about his inner struggles and outer contacts so that others might learn from them. 'As I have all along believed that what is possible for one is possible for all, my experiments have not been conducted in the closet, but in the open,' Gandhi asserted. To say this sounds somewhat boastful; not to say it would have meant suppressing an inspiring message.

Gandhi was the eternal teacher. He accordingly made himself accessible to all. The accessibility was not only complete, it was creative.

In the 1930s, a young Indian named Atulananda Chakra-

barti wrote a pamphlet on the increasingly envenomed Hindu-Moslem problem. He of course sent a copy to the Mahatma. Usually a prominent person in any country limits his exertion in such cases to the sending of a formal, polite acknowledgment. Gandhi read the brochure and wrote the unknown author a detailed criticism of its ideas and proposals. He also referred to minor matters. For instance, 'At page 151, you say India is "thousands of miles wide". Is it? As a matter of fact not more than 1500. Then you have not given the dates to your quotations in the appendix except in one case . . . And think of the spelling mistakes. Unpardonable! But the book should serve a useful purpose in spite of the defects, if you have adhered to the truth.'

Encouraged by his unexpected attention, Atulananda asked whether he could come and live in the ashram for a while. Gandhi invited him and he stayed for several weeks. They became friends and corresponded regularly thereafter. Atulananda kept sending his articles to Gandhi for comments; he suggested a culture league to bring Hindus and Moslems together. In one reply, dated August 3rd, 1937, Gandhi wrote:

Dear Atulananda, I hope your daughter is well and wholly out of danger. I have gone through your articles carefully. I still do not see light. It seems to me that no culture league will answer the purpose you and I have in view. It has got to be done by individuals who have a living faith and who would work with missionary zeal. Try again, if I have not seen what you see in your proposal. I shall be patient and attentive. I want to help if I can see my way clear.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi

The letter was written by hand in ink on a small sheet of handmade paper.

Atulananda continued to concentrate on the Hindu-Moslem tension and suggested a book about it. Replying by postcard on June 17th, 1939, the Mahatma said, 'The disease has gone too deep for books to help. Some big action is necessary. What I do not know as yet, Sincerely, M. K. Gandhi.'

Gandhi was in correspondence with many thousands of persons in India and elsewhere. In most cases, a letter became the seed of a prolonged personal relationship; he remembered members of the correspondent's family and mentioned them by name. Originally approached on a general political or religious question he would soon be asked for advice on private matters. He was a motherly father to multitudes.

In August 1947 Gandhi was in Calcutta coping with one of the ugliest crises in Indian history. City streets were running with Hindu and Moslem blood. One morning, Amiya Chakravarty came to see him. Amiya had been the literary secretary of Tagore. A cousin who was very dear to him had just died of an illness, and for comfort he wanted to share his sorrow with the Mahatma. He stood close to the wall in a corner of Gandhi's room; Gandhi was writing. When he lifted his head, Amiya stepped forward and told him of his cousin's passing. Gandhi made a friendly remark and invited him to the prayer meeting that evening. When Amiya arrived in the evening, Gandhi handed him a slip of paper and whispered, 'It came straight from the heart so it may have some value.' The note read:

Dear Amiya, I am sorry for your loss which in reality is no loss. 'Death is but a sleep and a forgetting.' This is such a sweet sleep that the body has not to wake again and the dead load of memory is thrown overboard. So far as I know, happily there is no meeting in the beyond as we have

it today. When the isolated drops melt, they share the majesty of the ocean to which they belong. In isolation they die but to meet the ocean again. I do not know whether I have been clear enough to give you any comfort. Love, Bapu.

The fact that he cared would have been comfort enough. He cared for one little person in the midst of his cares for the whole nation. He was convinced that politics is worth less than zero unless it is an integral part of the everyday life of human beings. Gandhi's unwalled existence was directed to the welfare of mankind through concern for green vegetables in village diet, the aching heart of a bereaved relative, the choice of a girl's husband, a mud pack for a sick peasant and an author's spelling. Nobody rises above such little things; they constitute life; nobody lives in the rarefied air of isms and theological principles.

Over a long period of years, Gandhi's daily post averaged a hundred letters, often with enclosures. He answered about ten of them himself by hand, dictated the replies to some, and instructed his secretaries how to answer others. No communication remained without a response. In numerous instances, where the correspondent did not object, Gandhi replied in *Harijan*. His weekly contributions to that magazine invariably took him two days of solid work. These too he wrote by hand; very rarely he dictated them.

All the remainder of his long day he gave himself to visitors. Ashram members had their personal and general problems; workers in the organizations which Gandhi had established for Harijan and peasant welfare, the popularization of khadi, the development of a nationwide language, and for Indian-sponsored education wanted guidance; journalists wanted interviews; foreigners asked his views on every variety of subject; and, always, whether he was in

politics or, as in the 1933 to 1939 period, officially withdrawn from politics, the great and small leaders of the Indian national movement sought his advice, approval and support. A few times in his life he spoke on the telephone. Usually, his conversations were face-to-face. It was not difficult to obtain an appointment with him. Except with a few important Indians or Englishmen, an interview might be attended by ten or more persons, but active participation was limited to Gandhi and the interviewer. Mrs. Margaret Sanger, birth-control advocate, visited Gandhi in December 1935; Yone Noguchi, the Japanese author, in January 1936; Lord Lothian, the British statesman, spent three days in Gandhi's village in January 1938. The list of the Mahatma's non-Indian guests looked like an international Who's Who. Outsiders felt that their sojourn in India was incomplete without a visit to Gandhi.

They were right; he came as near being India as one person could be. He called himself a Harijan, Moslem, Christian, Hindu, farmer, weaver. He wove himself into the texture of India. He had the gift of identification with large masses and with many individuals. He aimed to free India the hard but lasting way: by freeing the human beings of India. This would be more difficult than political liberation from England. How could it be done? 'I can indicate no royal road for bringing about the social revolution,' he wrote in 1945, 'except that we should represent it in every detail of our lives.' Gandhi's battlefield, therefore, was the hearts of men. There he made his home. He knew better than anybody how little of the battle had been fought and won. Yet without the social revolution in man's daily conduct, he said, 'we will not be able to leave India happier than when we were born'. The social revolution could not produce a new man. A new type of man would make the social revolution.

DESCENT INTO WAR

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU was president of the Congress for 1936 and 1937—an unusual honour and a heavy burden. But he himself admitted that Gandhi was 'the permanent Super-President' of Congress. It obeyed him. Thanks to Gandhi's suggestion, for instance, the twenty-five thousand persons who attended the Haripura annual convention in February 1938 were fed with hand-pounded rice, hand-ground flour, cow's (not buffalo's) milk and cow's butter; of course everybody wore khadi. In politics or out of politics, Gandhi could, by virtue of his hold on the people and on most Congress leaders, dictate the actions and veto the decisions of Congress if he wished.

Only after Gandhi gave his consent did Congress participate in the elections to the provincial and central legislatures held early in 1937, under the new British constitution, the Act of India of 1935. 'The boycott of the legislatures, let me tell you,' Gandhi explained in *Harijan* of May 1st, 1937, 'is not an eternal principle like that of truth and non-violence.'

Congress swept the elections in six of India's eleven provinces (Bombay, Madras, United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces and Orissa), was the largest single party in Assam, Bengal, and the North-west Frontier Province, but obtained a very small minority of the votes in Sind and the Punjab.

Should the Congress accept office in the provinces where it had won a majority? In March 1937, on the advice of Gandhi, it decided in the affirmative on the understanding, however, that the British governors of the provinces would not interfere, and in the hope of using office to organize the country for independence.

The total Congress membership rose from 3,102,113 at

the beginning of 1938, to 4,478,720 at the beginning of 1939. But Gandhi, never impressed by mere numbers, warned the party of being corrupted by power and office-seekers. He saw 'decay' setting in, and confessed that he could not undertake civil disobedience because, 'though there is non-violence enough among the masses, there is not enough among those who have to organize the masses'.

This reflected his disappointment with Congress leaders. When, therefore, the convention of 1939 elected Subhas Chandra Bose as president of Congress—he was president too in 1938, and rode to that session in an ancient vehicle drawn by fifty-one bulls—Gandhi stepped in and forced Bose to resign. Bose openly advocated violence and dreamed of an armed revolt against Britain. He was dynamic and popular and threatened to seize control of Congress from the Vallabhbhai Patel machine.

Gandhi also condemned the Congress provincial governments for using force during strikes and religious riots. As the 1930 decade advanced, Gandhi became more uncompromising in his pacifism. But neither Nehru, nor Bose, nor Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the outstanding Moslem leader of Congress, was a pacifist. Of all India's prominent nationalists, the only one who earned the title of 'Gandhi' was Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, known to the country as 'The Frontier Gandhi'. He is a Pathan from the wild, legendary north-west frontier region near the Khyber inhabited by the unruly Afridis, Wazirs and other mountain tribes; the British subsidized but never subdued them. Ghaffar Khan is six feet four, with a fine, perfectly oval head and a powerful muscular body. Grey-black stubble covers his head and face. He was sixty when I saw him in Devadas's home in New Delhi in 1942; his dark, penetrating, flashing eyes were those of a young man of thirty. His father and he were rich, but he renounced wealth to follow

the Mahatma. He lives in a village (when he is not in jail) and lives like the villagers. He wears a long, blue-grey blouse and very wide-seat trousers made of homespun. His feet are bare. His feet are beautifully moulded and his big hands are almost white. After he shook hands he touched his hand to his heart. As Gandhi was of the soil and sand of India, Ghaffar Khan is of its rocks and crags and ragging torrents. The hot blood of sharpshooting, trigger-happy mountaineers courses in his veins but he has adopted the philosophy of complete non-violence and so have the thousands of brother Pathans whom he organized as the Khudai Khidmatgar or Servants of God.

Millions obeyed Gandhi, myriads adored him, multitudes accounted themselves his followers, only a handful did as he did. He knew it. The knowledge did not diminish his volcanic energy or break his steel will. On the contrary; as he watched the darkness advance during the 1930s across China, Abyssinia, Spain, Czechoslovakia and above all Germany, his zeal for pure pacifism grew. 'My faith is brightest in the midst of impenetrable darkness,' he said on February 6th, 1939. He saw the second World War approaching.

In 1921, he had written that 'under independence too I would not hesitate to advise those who would bear arms to do so and fight for the country'. In 1928, answering the Frenchman the Rev. B. de Ligt, Tolstoy's friend Chertkov and other European pacifists who critized him for supporting the two South African wars and the first World War, Gandhi declared, 'I did participate in the three acts of war. I could not, it would be madness for me to, sever my connection with the society to which I belong.'

It would have been normal for Gandhi to be a pacifist from the very beginning of his public career. But basic attitudes rarely come to Gandhi through cogitation. The

absolute pacifism at which he arrived in the mid-1930s was partly the result of his less hopeful relationship towards the British Empire in which he had believed earlier. But chiefly, Gandhi's pacifism came out of his own inner development.

Once, when Gandhi was in prison, a scorpion stung a fellow prisoner; Gandhi sucked out the poison. A leper named Parchure Sastri, who was a Sanskrit scholar, asked to be admitted to Sevagram Ashram. Some members objected; they feared infection. Gandhi not only admitted him; he gave him massage... In March 1939 Gandhi undertook a fast unto death on behalf of the civil liberties of the people of Rajkot, where he had gone to school as a boy. The doctors sought to dissuade the Mahatma. He showed symptoms of myocarditis, an inflammation or hardening of the muscles of the heart.

But it was a Gandhian principle to subordinate the flesh to the spirit. When moral considerations made an act imperative, the body had no veto. If the flesh was weak it suffered or even died; it could not say no.

This was the source of Gandhi's pacifism. In the past, he had fought in the wars. He had allowed sympathy for Britain and duty to a country to guide him. Nor had he risen above Indian Nationalism. Morality did not yet completely command him.

However, by the time the second World War approached, he had achieved more complete detachment. Also, he said, 'I was not so disconsolate before [between 1914 and 1918] as I am today.' He envisaged the second war as a 'greater horror' than the first; 'the greater horror would prevent me from becoming the self-appointed recruiting sergeant that I had become during the last war'. He had little hope of persuading others. But whereas in the past he had resisted all proddings from abroad and

pleaded that he could not carry non-violence to the West while India remained violent, he advised the Abyssinians in 1935 not to fight.

'If the Abyssinians had adopted the attitude of non-violence of the strong,' Gandhi said, 'that is, the non-violence which breaks to pieces but never bends, Mussolini would have had no interest in Abyssinia. Thus if they had simply said: "You are welcome to reduce us to dust and ashes, but you will not find one Abyssinian ready to co-operate with you," what could Mussolini have done? He did not want a desert . . . If the Abyssinians had retired from the field and allowed themselves to be slaughtered, their seeming inactivity would have been much more effective though not for the moment visible. Hitler and Mussolini on the one hand and Stalin on the other are able to show the immediate effectiveness of violence. But it is as transitory as that of Genghis Khan's slaughter.'

The tragedy of Czechoslovakia and of Germany's Jews touched him even more deeply. 'The peace of Europe gained at Munich,' where Chamberlain and Daladier betrayed Czechoslovakia to Hitler in September 1938, Gandhi wrote, 'is a triumph of violence; it is also a defeat . . . England and France . . . quailed before the combined violence of Germany and Italy. But what have Germany and Italy gained? Have they added anything to the moral wealth of mankind?' These words make more sense today than on October 8th, 1938, when they were published in *Harijan*. 'The war is only postponed,' Gandhi continued prophetically. 'During the breathing time, I present the way of non-violence for acceptance by the Czechs. They do not yet know what is in store for them. They can lose nothing by trying the way of non-violence. The fate of Republican Spain is hanging in the balance. So is that of China. If in the end they all lose, they will

do so not because their cause is not just . . . I suggest that, if it is brave, as it is, to die as a man fighting against odds, it is braver, still to refuse to fight and yet to refuse to yield to the usurper. . . .'

While touring with Ghaffar Khan in October 1938, among the Pathans of the frontier, Gandhi wrote a *Harijan* article entitled 'If I were a Czech'. 'Democracy dreads to spill blood,' he said. 'The philosophy for which the two dictators stand calls it cowardice to shrink from carnage . . . Science of war leads one to dictatorship pure and simple. Science of non-violence can alone lead one to pure democracy . . . Russia is out of the picture just now. Russia has a dictator who dreams of peace and thinks he will wade to it through a sea of blood. . . .

'It was necessary to give this introduction to what I want to say to the Czechs and through them to all those nationalities which are called "small" or "weak". I want to speak to the Czechs because their plight moved me to the point of physical and mental distress.' His advice was: 'Refuse to obey Hitler's will and perish unarmed in the attempt. In so doing, though I lose the body, I save my soul, that is, my honour.'

Usually, the pacifist says, 'It is evil to kill.' He therefore abstains from war. He is answered by those who say, 'I'd rather kill than be killed.' To which, Gandhi replied, 'No, I'd rather be killed.'

'Man may and should shed his own blood for establishing what he considers to be his "right",' Gandhi wrote in *Harijan*. 'He may not shed the blood of his opponent who disputes his "right".'

In December 1938 the International Missionary Conference took place at Tambaram, near Madras, and when it was over, Christian clergymen, including Dr. John R. Mott, Reverend William Paton, secretary of the

International Missionary Council, Reverend Leslie B. Moss, secretary of the Conference of Missionary Societies of North America, and many others sat at Gandhi's feet in his ashram in Sevagram. Pyarelal Nayyar took notes. Soon they were cross-examining him on his formula for the Czechs. 'You do not know Hitler and Mussolini,' one missionary said. 'They are incapable of any moral response. They have no conscience, and they have made themselves impervious to world opinion. Would it not be playing into the hands of these dictators if, for instance, the Czechs, following your advice, confronted them with non-violence?'

'Your argument,' Gandhi objected, 'presupposes that the dictators like Mussolini and Hitler are beyond redemption.'

Discussions of a similar and even more challenging character were provoked by Gandhi's counsel to the Jews.

Gandhi wrote in *Harijan*, November 11th, 1938:

'My sympathies are all with the Jews. They have been the untouchables of Christianity ... A Jewish friend has sent me a book called *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization*, by Cecil Roth. It gives a record of what the Jews have done to enrich the world's literature, art, music, drama, science, medicine, agriculture, etc. ... the German persecution of the Jews seems to have no parallel in history. The tyrants of old never went so mad as Hitler seems to have done. If there ever could be a justifiable war in the name of and for humanity, war against Germany to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race would be completely justified. But I do not believe in any war. ...

'Can the Jews resist this organized and shameless persecution? ... If I were a Jew and were born in Germany and earned my livelihood there, I would claim Germany as my home even as the tallest gentile German might, and

challenge him to shoot me or cast me in the dungeon ... And for doing this I should not wait for the fellow Jews to join me in civil resistance, but would have confidence that in the end the rest were bound to follow my example. If one Jew or all the Jews were to accept the prescription here offered, he or they cannot be worse off than now ... The calculated violence of Hitler may even result in a general massacre of the Jews by way of his first answer to the declaration of such hostilities. But if the Jewish mind could be prepared for voluntary sacrifice, even the massacre I have imagined could be turned into a day of thanksgiving that Jehovah had wrought deliverance of the race even at the hands of a tyrant. For to the God-fearing, death has no terror....

'The Jews of Germany can offer Satyagraha under infinitely better auspices than the Indians of South Africa. The Jews are a compact, homogeneous community in Germany. They are far more gifted than the Indians of South Africa. And they have organized world opinion behind them. I am convinced that if someone with courage and vision can arise among them to lead them in non-violent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling of an eye be turned into the summer of hope. And what has today become a degrading man hunt can be turned into a calm and determined stand offered by unarmed men and women possessing the strength of suffering given to them by Jehovah ... The German Jews will score a lasting victory over the German gentiles in the sense that they will have converted the latter to an appreciation of human dignity.'

The Nazi press assaulted Gandhi savagely for these words. It threatened reprisals against India. 'I should rank myself a coward,' he replied, 'if for fear of my country or myself or Indo-German relations being harmed,

I hestitated to give what I felt in the innermost recesses of my heart to be one hundred per cent sound advice.'

The missionaries questioned him closely on his statements about the Jews. 'To be truly non-violent,' he said, 'I must love [my adversary] and pray for him even when he hits me.' The Jews should pray for Hitler. 'If even one Jew acted thus, he would save his self-respect and leave an example which, if it became infectious, would save the whole of Jewry and leave a rich heritage to mankind besides.'

Herman Kallenbach was living in Sevagram Ashram at the time. 'He has an intellectual belief in non-violence,' Gandhi remarked, 'but he says he cannot pray for Hitler ... I do not quarrel with him over his anger. He wants to be non-violent, but the sufferings of his fellow Jews are too much for him to bear. What is true of him is true of thousands of Jews who have no thought even of "loving the enemy". With them, as with millions, "revenge is sweet, to forgive is divine".' There were few divine Jews or Christians or Hindus. Only one little Hindu and very few of his friends were capable of divine forgiveness.

Jewish Frontier, a New York magazine, riddled Gandhi's proposal in March 1939, and sent him a copy. He quoted at length from the attack. 'I did not entertain the hope ... that the Jews would be at once converted to my view,' Gandhi replied. 'I should have been satisfied if even one Jew had been fully convinced and converted ... It is highly probable that, as the [*Jewish Frontier*] writer says, "A Jewish Gandhi in Germany, should one arise, could function for about five minutes and would be promptly taken to the guillotine." But that does not disprove my case or shake my belief in the efficacy of non-violence. I can conceive the necessity of the immolation of hundreds, if not thousands, to appease the hunger of dictators ...

Sufferers need not see the result during their lifetime ... The method of violence gives no greater guarantee than that of non-violence ...' Millions sacrifice themselves in war without any guarantee that the world will be better as a result or even that the enemy will be defeated. Yet who does not fiercely resent the suggestion that anybody should die in deliberate non-violent sacrifice?

I mentioned the subject to Gandhi in 1946 when Hitler was dead. 'Hitler,' Gandhi said, 'killed five million Jews. It is the greatest crime of our time. But the Jews should have offered themselves to the butcher's knife. They should have thrown themselves into the sea from cliffs ... It would have aroused the world and the people of Germany ... As it is they succumbed anyway in their millions.'

Gandhi in 1938 and 1939 was seeking a moral substitute for the impending war. He knew his ideas would be rejected. But he had to express them.

In December 1938 Mr. Takaoka, a member of the Japanese Parliament, came to Sevagram. He deliberately avoided the subject of the Sino-Japanese war; he asked how unity could be achieved between India and Japan.

'It can be possible,' Gandhi replied harshly, 'if Japan ceases to throw its greedy eyes on India.'

Takaoka requested a message for the Japanese party which advocated Asia for the Asiatics. 'I do not subscribe to the doctrine of Asia for the Asiatics if it is meant as an anti-European combination,' Gandhi affirmed. (Pyarelal published the interview in the December 24th, 1938, *Harijan.*) 'How can we have Asia for the Asiatics unless we are content to let Asia remain a frog in the well? ...'

A lady cabled from London to Gandhi on August 24th, the day after the Stalin-Hitler pact was signed. 'Please act. World awaiting lead.' The war was a week off.

Another woman wirelessed from England, 'Urge you consider immediate expression of your unshakable faith in reason not force to rulers and all peoples.' Similar urgent messages poured into Sevagram.

It was too late. On September 1st, 1939, the Nazi Army invaded Poland.

Sunday, September 3rd, 1939, 11 a.m.; British churches were filled; the British government declared war on Germany. I spent that afternoon in the country outside Paris. At 5 p.m. a lone plane flew overhead. The radio announced that France had gone to war. We drove back to town. Women stood in the streets of little towns gazing morosely into nowhere, into the bleak future. Some bit their fingernails. Our car paused for a long line of farm horses requisitioned by the army—heavy, well-groomed, powerful horses. A farmer put his arm around the neck of his horse, put his cheek against its head, and talked into its ear. The horse shook its head up and down. They were saying goodbye. Before it was over in 1945, more than thirty million persons in all parts of the world said goodbye to life. More than thirty million dead men, women and children; more than a hundred million wounded, hurt and incapacitated; millions of homes smashed; atom bombs dropped on two cities; hopes destroyed; ideals soured; moral values questioned.

'We have too many men of science, too few men of God,' General Omar N. Bradley, Chief of Staff, United States Army, said in Boston on November 10th, 1948. 'We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount ... The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living.'

Gandhi rejected the atom and grasped the Sermon on the Mount. He was a nuclear infant and an ethical giant. He knew nothing about killing and much about living in the twentieth century.

Only those who have no doubts can reject Gandhi completely.

CHAPTER VIII

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL *VERSUS* MOHANDAS K. GANDHI

THE day the second World War started, England took India into the war by proclamation without consulting any Indians. India resented this additional proof of foreign control. The next day, nevertheless, Gandhi boarded the first Delhi train to Simla in response to a telegraphic summons from the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, to come to the summer capital. 'We Do Not Want Any Understanding', the public at the station chanted as the Mahatma walked to the train. It was his day of silence, so he smiled and departed.

The Viceroy and the Mahatma discussed the nature of the coming hostilities, 'and as I was picturing before him the House of Parliament and the Westminster Abbey and their possible destruction, I broke down. I have become disconsolate. In the secret of my heart I am in perpetual quarrel with God that He should allow such things to go on'.

Gandhi had a 'daily quarrel' with God; non-violence had failed; God had failed. But at the end of each quarrel, the Mahatma decided that 'neither God nor non-

violence is impotent. Impotence is in men. I must try on without losing faith'.

Gandhi blamed Hitler for the war. 'Rightly or wrongly, and irrespective of what the other powers have done before under similar circumstances,' he wrote in *Harijan* of September 16th, 1939, 'I have come to the conclusion that Herr Hitler is responsible for the war. I do not judge his claim. It is highly probable that his right to incorporate Danzig is beyond question if the Danzig Germans desire to give up their independent status. It may be that his claim to appropriate the Polish Corridor is a just claim. My complaint is that he will not let the claim be examined by an independent tribunal.'

Critics said he had talked 'sentimental twaddle' in the Simla interview with the Viceroy. 'My sympathy for England and France,' Gandhi replied, 'is not the result of momentary emotion or, in cruder language, of hysteria.' Equally, 'My whole heart is with the Poles in the unequal struggle in which they are engaged for the sake of their freedom.'

Hitlerism, Gandhi declared, 'means naked ruthless force reduced to an exact science and worked with scientific precision'. It was thoroughly abhorrent to him.

But what could he do? In addition to his daily debate with God, Gandhi was involved in an interminable argument with Congress, which he admitted, echoed the views of most articulate Indians. With Gandhi non-violence was a creed, with Congress it 'was always a policy'. Congress adopted non-violence for the expected gains. Gandhi wanted non-violence irrespective of the fruits.

The day after war's beginning, Gandhi pledged publicly that he would not embarrass the British government. He would also lend moral support to England and her allies; even one who disapproves of war should distinguish between

aggressor and defender. Further than this, however, he could not go; he could not participate in the war effort nor would he defend India against an aggressor. He did not want India to have an army or to use police against Hindu-Moslem rioters. A constabulary to deal gently with bandits and professional hooligans was the maximum violence he might countenance.

Congress, on the other hand, was ready to support the war effort if specified conditions were satisfied.

From these different positions, Gandhi and Congress fought a friendly but hard battle.

On September 14th, 1939, the Working or Executive Committee of Congress issued a manifesto which condemned Fascist aggression in Poland yet recalled that the Western democracies had condoned or not opposed similar developments in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain and Czechoslovakia; it said the Western democracies must shed their own imperialism before they could convincingly contend that they were fighting imperialism and not merely rivals. 'A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic co-operation....'

Gandhi was present, as a guest, during the four days of discussion that fathered this manifesto. After its adoption, he revealed that Jawaharlal Nehru had drafted it. 'I was sorry,' Gandhi commented, 'to find myself alone in thinking that whatever support was to be given to the British should be given unconditionally' and non-violently. Gandhi disliked the tit-for-tat offer: India will fight if you make India free. Nevertheless, he commended the manifesto to the country: 'I hope that the statement will receive the unanimous support of all parties among Congressmen.'

How could he do this, the critics howled; how could he appeal for support of a view he had opposed? 'I would

not serve the cause of non-violence,' he replied, 'if I deserted my best co-workers because they could not follow me in an extended application of non-violence. I therefore remain with them in the faith that their departure from the non-violent method will be confined to the narrowest field and will be temporary.'

Haven't you changed your mind since 1918, some chided.

'At the time of writing,' he retorted, 'I never think of what I have said before. My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a given question, but to be consistent with the truth as it may present itself to me at a given moment. The result is that I have grown from truth to truth....'

Gandhi went beyond his plea for support of a manifesto that conflicted with his views; he made himself its spokesman in an interview with the Viceroy on September 26th. Lord Linlithgow replied on October 17th; England could not yet define her war aims. He cautioned India against a too rapid advance towards self-government. After the war, there would be changes in the direction of Dominion Status, he said.

Five days later, accordingly, the Working Committee voted against aiding Britain. It also instructed the Congress ministeries of the provinces to resign. Gandhi saw Congress coming closer to him.

Hitler overran Norway, Denmark, Holland and Belgium. France was next. Britain's stock was low in India. 'Let us strike now,' many Indians urged.

Gandhi replied in *Harijan* on June 1st, 1940: 'I am of the opinion that we should wait till the heat of the battle in the heart of the Allied countries subsides and the future is clearer than it is. We do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin. That is not the way of non-violence.'

Time was working for Indian independence. 'We are

nearing our goal without having fired a single shot,' Gandhi said. He wanted only the right to preach non-violence.

France surrendered to Hitler. Panic, and in places hope, seized India. There were runs on banks. Gandhi called for order. Soberly he predicted that 'Britain will die hard and heroically even if she has to. We may hear of reverses, but we will not hear of demoralization.'

Whenever Congress rejected Gandhi's pacifism and volunteered to aid the British, he did not interfere. Whenever Congress agreed with him and wanted to hinder the war effort, he objected.

The Working Committee met in Wardha to review the war crisis. On June 21st, 1940, it plainly stated that it could not 'go to the full length with Gandhi' on non-violence. 'So, for the first time,' Nehru wrote in his autobiography, Gandhi 'went one way and the Congress Working Committee another. . . .'

'I am both happy and unhappy over the result,' Gandhi affirmed. 'Happy because I have been able to bear the strain of the break and have been given the strength to stand alone. Unhappy because my word seemed to lose the power to carry with me those whom it was my proud privilege to carry all these many years.'

The Viceroy summoned the Mahatma for another audience on June 29th. Lord Linlithgow recognized Gandhi's indestructible influence; he intimated that Britain was ready to grant Indians a broader share in the Indian government.

The Working Committee met in Delhi early in July to weigh the offer. Gandhi had no use for it. He encountered the astute opposition of Rajagopalachari, the Mahatma's warm friend. Rajagopalachari converted Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Mahatma's loyal lieutenant. Only Ghaffar Khan, the 'Frontier Gandhi', sided with the Mahatma.

Gandhi printed a report of the proceedings: Rajagopalachari 'thinks that I suffer from obsession owing to too much brooding on non-violence. He almost thinks that my vision is blurred. It was no use returning the compliment though half-joking I did . . . I at once saw as clear as daylight that, if my position was not acceptable, Rajaji's was the only real alternative. I therefore encouraged him to persist in his effort, though all the time I held him to be hopelessly in the wrong'. Rajaji, or Rajagopalachari, won a big majority; five abstained.

Gandhi failed to convince Congress of the wisdom of pure pacifism in the midst of a war. All acknowledged that he could have killed Rajaji's resolution; indeed, one firm request from the Mahatma and Rajaji would probably have withdrawn it. That would have been dictation, however, and Gandhi believed too much in personal liberty to exploit his power to make men vote or act against their will. He preferred to break with Congress rather than break its leaders.

The Rajaji resolution, adopted, despite Gandhi's disapproval, on July 7th, announced that if India were given complete independence and a central India government 'It will enable Congress to throw its full weight in the efforts for the effective organization of the defence of the country'; free India would wage war as one of the allies.

Winston Churchill was Prime Minister of Great Britain and stirring England to gallant resistance. He had, through the years, made numerous statements against Indian independence. He now had the power to prevent it. On August 8th, accordingly, Linlithgow stated that he would invite a number of Indians to join his Executive Council and establish a War Advisory Council to meet regularly, but, in the paraphrase of Lord Pethick-Lawrence

who became Secretary of State for India in 1945, 'Britain could not divest herself of the responsibilities which her long association with India had imposed on her.' This foreshadowed Churchill's famous dictum of November 10th, 1942: 'I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside at the liquidation of the British Empire.'

Nor, said Linlithgow, could His Majesty's Government contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities to any Indian government whose authority was directly denied by large and powerful elements of the population. This indicated that Britain would not allow Congress to rule India without Moslem consent. It was the first time Britain gave the Moslem community a veto on India's political future.

Thoroughly incensed, the Working Committee, according to Lord Pethick-Lawrence's summary of its resolution, 'accused the British government of rejecting their friendly and patriotic offer of co-operation and making the issue of the minorities an insuperable barrier to India's progress'.

Thanks to Churchill, Congress again came back to Gandhi.

Gandhi explained the new position in a speech to the All-India Congress Committee on September 15th, 1940, in Bombay: 'I do not want England to be defeated or humiliated. It hurts me to find St. Paul's Cathedral damaged . . . It is not because I love the British nation and hate the German. I do not think the Germans as a nation are any worse than the English or the Italians. We are all tarred with the same brush; we are all members of the vast human family. I decline to draw any distinctions. I cannot claim any superiority for Indians . . . I can keep India intact and its freedom intact only if I have

goodwill towards the whole of the human family and not merely for the human family which inhabits this little spot of the earth called India.'

He would ask to see the Viceroy. 'I will tell him that this is the position to which we have been reduced: We do not want to embarrass you and deflect you from your purpose in regard to the war effort. We go our way and you go yours . . .' But Congress must have freedom to preach. 'If we carry the people with us, there will be no war effort on the part of our people. If on the other hand, without using any but moral pressure, you find that the people help the war effort, we can have no cause for grumbling. If you get assistance from the Princes, from the landlords, from anybody high or low, you can have it, but let our voice also be heard. If you accept my proposal . . . it will certainly be a feather in your cap. It will be honourable of you, although you are engaged in a life and death struggle, that you have given us this liberty. . . .

'The Viceroy', Gandhi anticipated, 'may say, "you are a visionary". I may fail in my mission, but we will not quarrel. If he says he is helpless, I will not feel helpless.'

The Viceroy said no, orally and in a confirming letter.

Rebuffed and eager to protest against the war and India's helplessness, Gandhi proposed to fast, but he allowed himself to be dissuaded by Mahadev Desai and chose instead the alternative of civil disobedience. He did not, however, launch a campaign of mass Satyagraha. He adopted a milder symbolic form which could not impede the war effort; he called on individuals selected by him by name to defy the official ban on propaganda against the war. He first pointed to Vinoba Bhave, a quiet, scholarly Gandhian. Bhave engaged in anti-war propaganda, was arrested, tried and sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

Next, Gandhi designated Nehru. He was arrested and tried. The judge gave him four years.

Patel was chosen next; he informed the Government of his intention and was arrested before he could make his speech.

As a Christmas gesture and in order that harassed British officials might enjoy their holiday without being called out to make arrests, Gandhi suspended the civil disobedience from December 25th, 1940, to January 4th, 1941. In the interval, however, the Government seized Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the president of Congress.

After a while, provincial and local Congress committees started submitting to Gandhi lists of potential resisters. In sum, 23,223 persons were arrested, most of them in Nehru's United Provinces. Gandhi had promised Congress to stay out of jail.

The person-by-person civil disobedience continued for about a year to the end of 1941. It generated little public enthusiasm. People were tired of going to jail.

In December 1941, the British government released those members of the Working Committee who had been imprisoned. The second World War had taken a menacing turn.

On December 7th, Japan struck at Pearl Harbour; the next day, Japanese forces occupied Shanghai and Siam (Thailand) and made a landing in British Malaya. Twenty-four hours later, the Tokyo navy sank two British battleships, the *Repulse* and the *Prince of Wales,* thus crippling England's naval strength in the Pacific.

The war was moving closer to India. The situation uncovered the old split in Congress between the Gandhian non-violent non-co-operators and those who would barter support of the war effort for an Indian national govern-

ment. Gandhi, accordingly, withdrew once more from the Congress leadership.

Hong Kong fell to the Japanese late in December 1941. The great British base of Singapore surrendered to the Japanese in February 1942. In March, Japan occupied most of Java, Sumatra and other islands of the Dutch East Indies. On March 9th, an imperial Tokyo communique announced that Rangoon, the capital of Burma, India's neighbour, had been seized.

In North Africa, Nazi General Rommel was moving east towards Egypt. The Arabs of Palestine were preparing a friendly welcome for him. Observers talked of a possible German-Japanese junction in India. From Cairo to Calcutta gloom brooded over the fortunes of the United Nations at war.

The American public was disturbed by the low war morale of the Indian people; having been a colony of Britain the United States understood India's aspirations despite the propaganda fog. President Roosevelt sent Colonel Louis Johnson as his personal envoy to India; this was an extraordinary act, for India was not a sovereign state, and therefore all the more calculated to impress the British government with America's concern. In London, United States Ambassador John G. Winant tried unsuccessfully to dissuade Prime Minister Churchill from stating publicly that the Atlantic Charter's self-government clause did not apply to India. Face-to-face at the White House and in transatlantic telephone conversations, Roosevelt had discussed India with Churchill and urged him to make an acceptable offer to the Indian people. Churchill never appreciated these prods.

Chiang Kai-shek, then in a key war position, made direct representations to President Roosevelt and to the British government in favour of Indian independence.

The Labour party was in the British war-time coalition government. Many of its members were friends of Indian freedom; Labour ministers reflected this attitude in Cabinet deliberations.

Pressed on all sides, Churchill consented to send Sir Stafford Cripps to New Delhi with a proposal. But though the British Empire and the Dutch had lost valuable outposts, the optimistic, resilient British Prime Minister had more faith than ever in ultimate military victory, and for the cogent reason that Russia and the United States were now England's partners. He was neither depressed nor defeatist about war prospects when Cripps went out to India.

Tall, thin, austere vegetarian, son of a Labour Lord and nephew of Beatrice Webb, the famous Fabian Socialist writer, Stafford Cripps attended exclusive schools and became an unorthodox, left-wing Labour Member of Parliament. A brilliant lawyer, he gave a large part of his huge professional income to political causes.

When the second World War opened, Sir Stafford abandoned his lucrative law practice and in November 1939 undertook a trip around the world to discover what people were thinking. He spent eighteen days in India, saw Jinnah, Linlithgow, Tagore, Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi. (Cripps was the same age as Nehru and twenty years younger than Gandhi.) The Mahatma lay ill on the floor of his hut, but as 'a concession to your English bones' he provided a stool for Cripps.

Sir Stafford drafted a plan for Indian constitutional changes which he presented to Lord Halifax, the former Lord Irwin, now British Foreign Secretary, who filed it in the archives. Cripps's interest in India was recalled when crisis clouds darkened the horizon of Asia in the winter of 1942. Meanwhile, his prestige had risen

enormously because he was serving as British Ambassador in Moscow when Hitler invaded Russia. He had been appointed to the small inner War Cabinet and was often mentioned as Churchill's successor.

Cripps arrived in New Delhi on March 22nd, 1942, and the same day commenced his conferences with British officials. On the 25th, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad called at 3 Queen Victoria Road, where Cripps was staying. Therewith began the negotiations with representative Indians.

Gandhi was in his ashram. He received a telegram from Cripps politely asking him to come to Delhi. 'I did not wish to go,' Gandhi said to me in June 1942, when I interviewed him at Sevagram, 'but I went because I thought it would do some good.'

On March 27th, at 2.15 p.m., Gandhi arrived at 3 Queen Victoria Road and remained with Cripps until 4.25 p.m. Sir Stafford showed the Mahatma the as-yet-unpublished proposals of His Majesty's Government. 'After a brief study,' Gandhi told me in Sevagram, 'I said to Cripps, "Why did you come if this is what you have to offer? If this is your entire proposal to India, I would advise you to take the next plane home." '

'I will consider that,' Cripps replied.

Cripps did not go home. He proceeded with the conversations. Gandhi went home to Savagram. After that first talk, he had no further contact with Cripps.

The deliberations continued until April 9th when Congress finally rejected the Cripps offer. Later, the Moslem League, the Sikhs, Hindu Mahasabha, the Harijans and Liberals rejected it. Nobody accepted it. The Cripps Mission failed.

On April 12th, Sir Stafford went home.

The 'Draft Declaration by His Majesty's Government'

brought to India by Cripps consisted of Articles A. B. C and D which dealt with the post-war period and Article E which dealt with India's war effort. The first four articles provided for a full-fledged Dominion which, as Cripps explained to a press conference, could vote itself out of the Commonwealth.

Congress, and Gandhi, would have accepted that.

An assembly consisting entirely of Indians would, after the war, frame a constitution for India; the representatives in that body of British India would be elected. But one-third of the constituent assembly would be appointed by the princes of India with whom the British had considerable influence.

This did not satisfy Indians who feared that England would seek to retain power in India by manipulating the autocratic maharajas.

Moreover, any province could, if it did not like the future constitution, refuse to accede to the Indian Union. 'With such non-acceding Provinces,' reads the Draft Declaration, 'should they desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution, giving them the same full status as the Indian Union....'

This could have led to the establishment of many India's, a Hindu India, a Moslem India, a Princely India, perhaps a Sikh India. But Gandhi had said that the vivisection of India was a sin.

The Cripps terms of the future post-war settlement violated basic Congress and Gandhian principles. That Azad, Nehru and Rajagopalachari, the Congress spokesmen, should nevertheless have negotiated with Cripps shows how eager they were to come to an agreement about the present.

Article E regarding the immediate war-time arrangement stated: 'His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain control and direction

of the defence of India as part of the total war effort' but invited the leaders of the Indian people to participate in it.

Gandhi did not wish to fight this war and therefore Article E was to him unacceptable. Congress did wish to contribute to the war effort. But it found Article E vague and restrictive. All documents show that throughout the *pourparlers* with Cripps the efforts of Azad, Nehru and Rajagopalachari were directed to expanding the responsibility and activity of Indians in the war effort; the British, on the other hand, sought to limit them. It was on this point that the talks broke down.

Official British sources blamed the failure of the Cripps mission on Gandhi's pacifism. Others blamed Cripps and Churchill. Nehru said, 'After Gandhiji left Delhi there was no consultation with him of any kind and it is entirely wrong to imagine that the rejection was due to his pressure.' Nehru reiterated this view in his book, *The Discovery of India*, published in 1946, years after the heat of the Cripps controversy had died away.

In 1946, Gandhi said to me, 'They have asserted that I had influenced the negotiations after I left Delhi. But that is a lie.'

'Englishmen have told me,' I informed him, 'that you telephoned from Sevagram to Delhi and instructed Congress to reject the Cripps offer. They declare they have a record of that conversation.'

'It is all a tissue of lies,' he declared. 'If they have a record of the telephone conversation let them produce it.'

It is easy to see how Gandhi's pacifism would mislead people in interpreting the collapse of the Cripps talks. Gandhi rejected the Cripps offer because of his pacifism and, too, out of devotion to the idea of a united India. Since Gandhi could at all times, whether or not he actively led Congress, bend it to his will, it would be natural to de-

duce that in rejecting the Cripps proposal, Congress obeyed Gandhi. This appears logical but it omits Gandhi's psychology. On numerous occasions before Cripps, and on one subsequent occasion which determined the fate of India, Gandhi gave Congress a free hand even when he disliked the intended act of Congress. That was his non-violence. Non-violence was more than non-killing to Gandhi, more than non-hurting. It was freedom. Had he coerced his followers, he would have been a violent dictator. He knew that many Congress leaders wished to participate in the conduct of the war. He would not interfere.

Some day the official British and American reports on the Cripps mission (Louis Johnson functioned as intermediary at one stage) will be published. Several interesting documents have already been published.

On March 10th, the day before Churchill announced that Cripps was going to India, Roosevelt sent a long cable to Churchill about India. Dipping into American history between 1783 and 1789 for an analogy, the President suggested a stopgap government that would function for 'five or six years'. 'Perhaps', Roosevelt declared, 'some such method . . . might cause the people of India to forget hard feelings and to become more loyal to the British Empire. . . .'

India, Roosevelt added in the cable to Churchill, is 'none of my business' and 'for the love of Heaven do not bring me into this, though I do want to be of help'.

Robert E. Sherwood, who quotes this dispatch in his book *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, declares, 'It is probable that the only part of the cable with which Churchill agreed was Roosevelt's admission that it is 'none of my business'. . . 'Hopkins', Sherwood continues, 'said a long time later that he did not think that any suggestions from the President

to the Prime Minister in the entire war were so wrathfully received as those relating to the solution of the Indian problem. As one of Churchill's closest and most affectionate associates has said to me, "The President might have known that India was the one subject on which Winston would never move a yard". An inch would be more like it.

On Sunday, April 12th, 1942, Harry Hopkins was at Chequers, the Prime Minister's country residence, when he received a cable request from Roosevelt to do everything possible to prevent the breakdown of the Cripps negotiations; the President also wired Churchill saying,

I am unable regretfully to agree with the point of view you express in your message to me that the American public believes the negotiations have failed on general broad lines. The general impression here is quite the contrary. The almost universal feeling is that the deadlock has been due to the unwillingness of the British government to concede the right of self-government to the Indian people notwithstanding the Indians' willingness to entrust technical military and naval defence control to the competent British authorities. American public opinion cannot understand why, if the British government is willing to permit component parts of India to secede from the British Empire after the war, it is not willing to permit them during the war to enjoy what is tantamount to self-government.

Roosevelt added, 'I gather that last Thursday night [April 9th], agreement was almost reached.'

Cripps had been working eagerly for an agreement, and when the British government's Draft Declaration was rejected he made a new offer to Congress. 'Cripps', Churchill told Hopkins, 'had presented a new proposal to Nehru without consultation with the Governor General [Viceroy].'

The new offer brought an understanding measurably near. 'It was perfectly clear,' Hopkins reported, 'that the Governor General was irritated with the whole business.' The Viceroy telegraphed Churchill. Churchill ordered Cripps to withdraw the new unauthorized proposal and return to England.

Louis Johnson informed Roosevelt. Roosevelt wired Hopkins to see Churchill and try to reopen the negotiations.

Churchill, 'probably with some vehemence', Sherwood suspects, replied to Roosevelt through Hopkins. The upshot of it was that he did not trust Congress. 'Churchill said that he personally was quite ready to retire to private life if that would be any good in assuaging American public opinion . . .' In any case, the negotiations could not be reopened because Cripps had already left India. 'India was one area', Hopkins felt, 'where the minds of Roosevelt and Churchill would never meet.'

Obviously, the minds of Gandhi and Churchill would never meet.

In 1935, Churchill had declared, 'Gandhism and all that it stands for must ultimately be grappled with and finally crushed.' It stood for India's independence. For the first time since 1935, Churchill was in office. Cripps, the Labour anti-imperialist, was the victim of Churchill. He was the envoy of the Churchill government, and 'We mean to hold our own' was Churchill's policy on India. Churchill regarded India as Britain's property. How could he have authorized Cripps to give it away? Only when Churchill was replaced by Cripps's Labour party did India win independence.

Churchill and Gandhi were alike in that each gave his life to a single cause. A great man is all of one piece like good sculpture. Churchill's absorbing purpose was the preservation of Britain as a first-class power. During the

war he showed little interest in peace aims. He was bound to the past. He was a product of the nineteenth century and he loved it. He loved Empire, royalty and caste. Lloyd George despised the British upper classes, the generals, the nobility. He fought them. Churchill wanted to perpetuate them. His attachment was not so much to them as to the nineteenth century that made them. The nineteenth century was the British century, the century of Pax Britannica after the defeat of Napoleonic France and before the rise of the Kaiser's Germany, the century of the flowering of the British Empire under Queen Victoria. Britain's past glory was Churchill's god. The upper classes were synonymous to him with the greatness of his country. So was parliamentary democracy. So was India.

Churchill fought the second World War to preserve the heritage of Britain. Would he permit the half-naked fakir to rob her of that heritage? If Churchill could help it, Gandhi would not be striding up the steps of the Viceroy's palace to negotiate or parley.

From the time he became the King's First Minister in 1940 to the day his party went out of office in 1945, Churchill was in conflict with Gandhi. It was a contest between the past of England and the future of India.

A British cartoonist once drew Churchill in a loincloth and, in the next panel, Gandhi in top hat, frock coat and striped trousers, smoking a long cigar and carrying a cane and brief-case. The device suggested how different they were under the surface.

Churchill is the Byronic Napoleon. Political power is poetry to him. Gandhi was the sober saint to whom such power was anathema. The British aristocrat and the brown plebeian were both conservatives, but Gandhi was a non-conformist conservative. As he grew older Churchill

became more Tory, Gandhi more revolutionary. Churchill loved social traditions. Gandhi smashed social barriers. Churchill mixed with every class, but lived in his own. Gandhi lived with everybody. To Gandhi, the lowliest Indian was a child of God. To Churchill, all Indians were the pedestal for a throne. He would have died to keep England free, but was against those who wanted India free.

CHAPTER IX

MY WEEK WITH GANDHI

WHAT an unhappy country! That was my first impression of India in May 1942, and the impression was deepened by my two months' stay. Rich Indians were unhappy, poor Indians were unhappy, the British were unhappy.

One did not have to be in India for more than a few days to realize how abysmally poor the people were. American and many European farmers would consider it bad for business to keep their livestock in accommodation as unhealthy as the tenements I visited with Dr. Ambedkar in Bombay; hundreds of thousands lived in them. Gandhi was fully dressed compared to the nakedness of peasants one saw in villages. The vast majority of Indians are always, literally always, hungry.

'The expectation of life,' says the 1931 British official census report on India, is '26.56 years for females and 26.91 for males.' The average person born in India could look forward to only twenty-seven years of life.

According to British figures, one hundred and twenty-five million Indians contracted malaria annually and only a few could afford a grain of quinine. Half a million Indians died of tuberculosis each year.

Climate is only part of the explanation; an Indian community had a death rate five times higher than a neighbouring British settlement.

Despite disease and mortality, India's population was increasing by five million each year. This was the biggest problem of the nation. In 1921, India had 304,000,000 inhabitants; in 1931, 338,000,000; in 1941, 388,000,000. In the same twenty years the area under cultivation was practically stable and industry did not appreciably expand. The poorer the country the higher the birth rate. The higher the birth rate the poorer the country.

The British in India stressed their achievements. But they did not deny the cankers. They blamed the Hindu religion and Moslem backwardness; Indians blamed England. It was an atmosphere in which work and life were becoming increasingly unsatisfactory for the British.

Englishmen whose families had made India their career for more than a century knew that there was no future for them here. India did not want them and they sensed it and were sad. Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, the Viceroy's private secretary, and Major-General Molesworth, Assistant to Wavell as Commander-in-Chief, bicycled to and from work under the hot Indian sun to save petrol though they had cars and drivers. Many of the British were good men, but India preferred to be ruled by bad Indians. Governing unwilling India was no longer 'fun'; the British officials were as sick of India as India was of them. Twenty years of Gandhi's non-violence had destroyed their faith in the future of the Empire.

A typical New Delhi university student delivered a passionate diatribe against Britain. I said to him, 'Tell me, since you dislike the British so violently, would you want Japan to invade and conquer India?'

'No,' he replied, 'but we Indians pray that God may give

the British enough strength to stand up under the blows they deserve.'

Some Indians went to the length of preferring Japan to England.

No Indian party or group was supporting the war except the Communists. After Hitler invaded Russia in June 1941, they supported Britain, and the British imperialists in India supported them but did not relish the unnatural liaison.

I heard Nehru address a hundred thousand in Bombay. The Communists formed a heckling island in the vast ocean of brown faces and white clothes. 'This is a people's war,' they chorused.

'If you think it is a people's war go and ask the people,' Nehru shouted. That and the public's hostile reaction silenced them. They knew he told the truth and the British knew it too.

'I would fight Japan sword in hand,' Nehru declared, 'but I can only do so as a free man.'

India could have been held if it had had no freedom, just as a dictator can rule by complete suppression. But the moment Nehru was free enough to say he was not free, India's freedom was inevitable. That is why Gandhi always insisted on freedom of speech as the irreducible minimum. The British administrators in India saw this even when London did not.

'We will be out of here two years after the war ends,' Sir Reginald Maxwell, Home Member in the Viceroy's Council, told me in his home at dinner. He was in charge of police and internal order, and the Indians hated him, but he had no illusions because to him Empire was a daily grind while to Churchill it was romance.

The Viceroy said to me, 'We are not going to remain in India. Of course, Congress does not believe this. But we

will not stay here. We are preparing for our departure.'

When I reported these opinions to Indians they did not believe them. They argued bitterly: Churchill and many lesser Churchills in New Delhi and the provinces will obstruct independence or vitiate it by vivisecting the country.

Nehru said to me, 'Gandhi has straightened our backs and stiffened our spines.'

You cannot ride a straight back.

Independence was near. But the present was so black that few could see the future. History had stood still so long in India that nobody foresaw how fast it was about to move. Indians resented the stagnation; it gave them a sense of frustration.

In Bombay I talked to J. R. D. Tata, the head of the big steel-chemicals-airlines-textiles-hotels trust. His father was Parsi, his mother French; he speaks excellent English and French and is intelligent and cultured. He said he was unhappy because strangers ruled his country. On his desk stood several brightly polished two-inch anti-tank shells which a Tata mill was making for the British—and a plastic plaque of Mahatma Gandhi.

An American general stationed in India said 'the British are like a drop of oil in a bucket of water'.

The Viceroy talked about Gandhi. 'Make no mistake about it,' he asserted. 'The old man is the biggest thing in India . . . He had been only good to me . . . If he had come from South Africa and been only a saint he might have taken India very far. But he was tempted by politics. Make no mistake. His influence is very great.'

Gandhi, he said, was now contemplating some kind of civil disobedience campaign. 'I have been here six years,' Lord Linlithgow declared, 'and I have learned restraint. I sit here until late in the evening studying reports and

carefully digesting them. I will not take precipitate action. But if I felt that Gandhi was obstructing the war effort I would have to bring him under control.' He struck the desk with his hand and the four telephones tinkled.

I said it would be bad if Gandhi died in jail.

'I know,' the Viceroy agreed. 'He is old, and you know you can't feed the old man. He is like a dog and can empty his stomach at will . . . I hope none of this will be necessary but I have a grave responsibility and I cannot permit the old man to interfere with the war effort.'

Nehru was going down to Sevagram to consult the Mahatma about the contemplated civil disobedience action. I asked him to arrange an interview for me. Soon I received a telegram reading: 'Welcome. Mahadev Desai.'

I got out of the train at the small town of Wardha, was met by an emissary from Gandhi and slept on the roof of a Congress hostel; all night the orange-white-green Congress flag played a Morse code in the breeze. Early in the morning, I took a tonga with Gandhi's dentist for Sevagram. (A tonga is a one-horse, two-wheel vehicle in which passengers sit behind the driver with their backs to the horse.) I tried to make him talk about Gandhi's teeth. He talked about British politics.

The tonga stopped where the dirt road met the village. There stood Gandhi. He said, 'Mr. Fischer,' with a British accent and we shook hands. He greeted the dentist and turned round and I followed him to a bench. He sat down, put his palm on the bench and said, 'Sit down.' The way he sat down first and the way he touched the bench with his hand was like saying, 'This is my house, come in.' I felt at home immediately.

Each day I had an hour's interview with Gandhi; there was also an opportunity for conversation at meals; in addition, I walked with him once or twice a day. I usually

arrived for the morning constitutional while he was still sitting on his bed in the open air eating mango pulp. Between spoonfuls he plunged into serious discussion. Breakfast finished, he accepted a towel and a long rectangular, narrow-necked, corked bottle of water from Kasturbai and washed his hands before starting on the stroll across nearby fields. Kasturbai, with sunken face, straight mouth and square jaw, seemed to listen attentively, but I did not hear or see her say a single word to her husband during the entire week, nor he to her. At meals and prayers she sat slightly behind his left shoulder fanning him solicitously. She always looked at him; he rarely looked at her, yet he wanted her nearest to him and there appeared to be perfect understanding between them.

During walks, Gandhi kept his arms on the shoulders of two young girls or boys but moved forward with long quick strides and kept up a rapid conversation without losing breath or, apparently, tiring. The walk lasted not less than half an hour. When he returned I was ready for rest and leaned against a post while he continued to speak.

Gandhi was well built, with fine muscular bulging chest, thin waist, and long thin firm legs, bare from sandals to short, tight loincloth. His knees were pronounced bulges and his bones wide and strong; his hands were big and the fingers big and firm. His chocolate-coloured skin was soft, smooth and healthy. He was seventy-three. His fingernails, hands, feet, body were immaculate; the loincloth, the cheesecloth cape he occasionally wore in the sun, and the folded, moistened kerchief on his head were bright white. Once a drop of yellow mango juice stained his loincloth and he scratched it intermittently during an hour.

His body did not look old. He did not give one a feeling that he was old. His head showed his age. His head was large, wide at the top and tapering down to a small face;

big ears extended away from it abruptly. His upper lip, covered with a black-and-white stubble moustache, was so narrow that it almost met the fat, down-pointed nose. The expression of his face came from his soft and gentle eyes, the sensitive lower lip which combined self-control with strength and showed suffering, and the ever-present smile revealing naked gums. (He wore his dentures only for eating and took them out and washed them in public; he wore gold-rimmed bifocals; he shaved his face every day with a straight razor, but sometimes one of the men or women disciples shaved him.)

His facial features, with the exception of his quiet, confident eyes, were ugly and in repose his face would have been ugly, but it was rarely in repose. Whether he was speaking or listening, it was alive and registering actively. He spoke with a low, sing-song, undistinguished voice (many Indians have the same sing-song when they speak English) and he gestured eloquently, but not always, with the fingers of one hand. His hands were beautiful.

Lloyd George looked like a great man. One could not help seeing that Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt had stature and distinction. Not Gandhi. (Nor Lenin.) Outwardly he had nothing remarkable about him; perhaps the lower lip. His personality was in what he was and what he had done and what he said. I felt no awe in Gandhi's presence. I felt I was in the presence of a very sweet, gentle, informal, relaxed, happy, wise, highly civilized man. I felt, too, the miracle of personality, for by sheer force of personality, without an organization—Congress was a loose organization—or government behind him, Gandhi had radiated his influence to the far ends of a disunited country and, indeed, to every corner of a divided world. He did it not through his writings; few people anywhere had read his books, and his articles, though known

abroad and republished widely in India, were not the source of his hold on people. He reached people through direct contact, action, example and loyalty to a few simple, universally flouted principles: non-violence, truth, and the exaltation of means above ends.

The big names of recent history: Churchill, Roosevelt, Lloyd George, Stalin, Lenin, Hitler, Woodrow Wilson, the Kaiser, Lincoln, Napoleon, Metternich, Talleyrand, etc., had the power of states at their disposal. The only non-official figure comparable to Gandhi in his effect on men's minds is Karl Marx whose dogma, however, was a prescription for a system of government. One has to go back centuries to find men who appealed as strongly as Gandhi did to the conscience of individuals. They were men of religion, in another era. Gandhi showed that the spirit of Christ and of some Christian fathers, and of Buddha and of some Hebrew prophets and Greek sages, could be applied in modern times and to modern politics. He did not preach about God or religion; he was a living sermon. He was a good man in a world where few resist the corroding influence of power, wealth and vanity. There he sat, four-fifths naked, on the earth in a mud hut in a tiny Indian village without electricity, radio, running water, or telephone. It was a situation least conducive to awe, pontification, or legend. He was in every sense down-to-earth. He knew that life consists of the details of life.

'Now put on your shoes and hat,' Gandhi said. 'Those are two indispensable things here. Don't get a sunstroke.' It was 110° with practically no shade except inside the huts, which were like heated ovens. 'Come along,' he said in a friendly tone of mock command. I followed him to the common dining hall which consisted of two long walls of matting connected by a third back wall of the same mate-

rial. Where one entered, the building was open to the elements.

Gandhi sat down on a cushion near the entrance. At his left was Kasturbai, on his right Narendra Dev, an Indian Socialist leader whom the Mahatma had undertaken to cure of asthma. I was Dev's neighbour. There were about thirty diners. Women sat apart. Several bright-eyed, brown-faced youngsters, between the ages of three and eight, were opposite me. Everyone had a thin straw mat under him and a brass tray in front of him on the ground. Male and female waiters, members of the ashram, moved noiselessly on bare feet, depositing food on the trays. A number of pots and pans were placed near Gandhi's legs. He handed me a bronze bowl filled with a vegetable stew in which I thought I discerned chopped spinach leaves and pieces of squash. A woman poured some salt on my tray and another gave me a metal tumbler with warm water and another with warm milk. Then she came back with two little boiled potatoes in their jackets and some soft, flat wheatcakes baked brown. Gandhi handed me one hard, paper-thin wheatcake from a metal container in front of him.

A gong sounded; a robust man in white shorts stopped waiting on the trays, stood erect, closed his eyes leaving only a white slit open—it made him look blind—and started a high-pitched chant in which all others, including Gandhi, joined. The prayer ended with 'Shanti, Shanti, Shanti' which, Dev said, means 'Peace'.

Everyone started eating with their fingers, fishing out the vegetable stew with a wheatcake folded in four. I was given a tea-spoon and then some butter for the cake. Gandhi munched busily, stopping only to serve his wife, Dev and me.

'You have lived in Russia for fourteen years,' was his

first political remark to me. 'What is your opinion of Stalin?'

I was very hot, and my hands were sticky, and I had commenced to discover my ankles and legs from sitting on them, so I replied briefly, 'Very able and very ruthless.'

'As ruthless as Hitler?' he asked.

'At least.'

After a pause, he turned to me and said, 'Have you seen the Viceroy?' I told him I had, but he dropped the subject.

'You can have all the water you want,' he told me. 'We take good care that it is boiled. And now eat your mango.' I began to peel it and several people, Gandhi too, laughed. He explained that they usually turned it in their hands and squeezed it to make it soft and then sucked on one end, but he added that I was right to peel it to see whether it was good.

Lunch was at eleven and dinner just before sundown. Kurshed Naoroji, a member of the ashram and grand-daughter of Dadabhai Naoroji, brought my breakfast—tea, biscuits or bread with honey and butter and mango—to the mud-walled, bamboo-roofed guest hut where I lived.

At lunch on the second day, Gandhi handed me a table-spoon for the vegetable dish. He said the tablespoon was more commensurate with my size. He offered me a boiled onion from his pot. I asked for a raw one instead; it was a relief from the flat food of the menu.

At lunch on the third day, Gandhi said, 'Fischer, give me your bowl and I will give you some of the vegetables.' I said I had eaten the mess of spinach and squash four times in two days and had no desire for more.

'You don't like vegetables,' he commented.

'I don't like the taste of these vegetables three days running.'

'Ah,' he exclaimed, 'you must add plenty of salt and lemon.'

'You want me to kill the taste,' I interpreted.

'No,' he laughed, 'enrich the taste.'

'You are so non-violent you would not even kill a taste,' I said.

'If that were the only thing men killed, I wouldn't mind,' he remarked.

I wiped the perspiration from my face and neck. 'Next time I'm in India . . .' Gandhi was chewing and seemed not to have heard me so I stopped.

'Yes,' he said, 'the next time you are in India. . . .'

'You either ought to have air-conditioning in Sevagram or live in the Viceroy's palace.'

'All right,' Gandhi acquiesced.

He encouraged banter. One afternoon when I came to his hut for the daily interview, he was not there. When he arrived he lay down on his bed. 'I will take your blows lying down,' he said, inviting questions. A Moslem woman gave him a mud pack for his abdomen. 'This puts me in touch with my future,' he said. I did not comment.

'I see you missed that one,' he noted.

I said I had not missed it but thought he was too young to think about returning to the dust.

'Why,' he declared, 'you and I and all of us, some in a hundred years, but all sooner or later, will do it.'

On another occasion he quoted a statement he had made to Lord Sankey in London; 'Do you think,' he had said, 'I would have reached this green old age if I hadn't taken care of myself? This is one of my faults.'

'I thought you were perfect,' I ventured.

He laughed and the eight or ten members of the ashram who usually sat in on the interviews laughed. (He had asked me whether I objected to their presence.) 'No,' he

declared. 'I am very imperfect. Before you are gone you will have discovered a hundred of my faults and if you don't, I will help you to see them.'

Usually the hour's interview began with his finding the coolest place in the hut for me to sit. Then with a smile he would say, 'Now', inviting 'blows'. As the hour was about to end he would, with an unerring time sense, look at his big 'dollar' watch and proclaim, 'Now, your hour is up.' He was minutely punctual.

One day when I was leaving his hut after a talk, he said, 'Go and sit in a tub.' I wondered whether that was the Indian equivalent of 'go sit on a tack'. But crossing the sun-baked hundred yards between Gandhi's hut and the guest hut, the heat made the inside of my head feel dry and I decided that sitting in a tub would be a very good idea. In fact I thought I could improve on it. Adjoining the one living-room bedroom of the guest hut was a small water room with cement floor on which stood a variety of pots, pitchers, tubs and bowls; an old woman kept them filled with water. Six or seven times a day I would step into this bathroom, slip off the two pieces of clothing and sandals I wore, and take a standing splash bath with the aid of a cup.

The worst ordeal of the day was typing the complete record of my conversations with Gandhi and others in the ashram, and with Nehru who came for two days of that week. After five minutes I was tired and wet all over with perspiration. Stimulated by Gandhi's suggestion to sit in a tub, I placed a small wooden packing case in one of the tin wash-tubs filled with water, put a folded Turkish towel on the packing case, then set a somewhat larger wooden packing case just outside the tub and placed my portable typewriter on it. These arrangements made, I sat down on the box in the tub and typed my notes. At intervals of a

few minutes, when I began to perspire, I dipped a bronze bowl into the tub and poured the water over my neck, back and legs. By that method I was able to type a whole hour without feeling exhausted. The innovation stirred the ashram to mirth and jolly comment. It was not a glum community. Gandhi saw to that. He made eyes at the little children, provoked adults to laughter and joked with all and sundry visitors.

I asked Gandhi to be photographed with me. 'If a photographer is around by accident,' he replied, 'I have no objection to being seen in a photograph with you.'

'That,' I said, 'is the biggest compliment you have paid me.'

'Do you want compliments?' he inquired.

'Don't we all?'

'Yes,' Gandhi agreed, 'but sometimes we have to pay too dearly for them.'

During the week he inquired whether I knew Upton Sinclair, Dr. Kellogg, the food specialist of Battle Creek, Michigan, and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. But I noticed no general curiosity. He focussed his attention on issues which he could affect and on questions put to him.

I said I had been told that the Congress party was in the hands of big business and that he himself was supported by Bombay millowners. 'What truth is there in these assertion?' I probed.

'Unfortunately they are true,' he affirmed. 'Congress hasn't enough money to conduct its work. We thought in the beginning to collect four annas from each member per year and operate on that. But it hasn't worked.'

'What proportion of the Congress budget,' I pressed, 'is covered by rich Indians?'

'Practically all of it,' he admitted. 'In this ashram, for instance, we could live much more poorly than we do and

spend less money. But we do not and the money comes from our rich friends.'

(There is a famous quip attributed to Mrs. Naidu, which Gandhi enjoyed tremendously, to the effect that 'it costs a great deal of money to keep Gandhiji living in poverty'.)

'Doesn't the fact that Congress gets its money from the moneyed interests affect Congress politics?' I asked. 'Doesn't it create a moral obligation?'

'It creates a silent debt,' he stated. 'But actually we are very little influenced by the thinking of the rich. They are sometimes afraid of our demand for full independence... The dependence of Congress on rich sponsors is unfortunate. I used the word "unfortunate". It does not pervert our policy.'

'Isn't one of the results that there is a concentration on nationalism almost to the exclusion of social and economic problems?'

'No,' he replied. 'Congress has from time to time, especially under the influence of Pandit Nehru, adopted advanced social programmes and schemes for economic planning. I will have those collected for you.'

Most of the money for the maintenance of Gandhi's ashram and of Gandhi's organizations for Harijan and peasant uplift and the teaching of a national language came from G. D. Birla, millionaire textile manufacturer at whose house in New Delhi the Mahatma sometimes lived. Birla first saw Gandhi in 1920 in Calcutta. On Gandhi's arrival at the railway station, Birla, then a young broker, and several friends unhitched the horses of the Mahatma's landau and pulled it through the streets. Birla became a devotee. He did not agree with some of the Mahatma's policies, but that did not matter; Gandhi was his 'father', he says. Had Birla believed in the spinning wheel he would have had to close his mills, but he did not believe in

it. After the death of Birla's wife, he never remarried and became a Brahmachari; that was probably part of the bond between him and Gandhi. Gandhi first went to Birla's house in 1933 for ten days. Subsequently, he stayed a number of times for shorter or longer periods. Often, however, Gandhi preferred to make his headquarters in the Delhi Harijan colony near Kingsway; his upkeep there cost Birla fifty rupees a day. The ashram, including its hospital and dairy, cost Birla an estimated fifty thousand rupees a year and he supported it after 1935; he never kept accounts of what he gave Gandhi. But Gandhi wrote out in his own hand every smallest item of expenditure and presented it to Birla who tore it up before Gandhi's eyes without examining it. In addition, Birla backed many welfare institutions in which Gandhi was interested. His outlay for Gandhian enterprises ran into millions of rupees. Gandhi's friendship gave Birla prestige and satisfaction and perhaps even business advantages, for he learned many political secrets from the Mahatma. But had the occasion demanded, Gandhi might have led a strike of Birla's mill workers, as he did in the case of his friend and financial backer, Ambalal Sarabhai of Ahmedabad. Gandhi was tolerant of capitalists even when he opposed capitalist exploitation; he was equally tolerant of Englishmen after he turned against the British Empire. He would undoubtedly have stayed in Churchill's house. He was too sure of his purity and purpose to think he could be contaminated. To Gandhi nobody was an untouchable, neither Birla, nor a Communist, nor a Harijan, nor an imperialist. He fanned the spark of virtue wherever he discovered it. He allowed for the diversity of human nature and the multiplicity of man's motives.

Early in the week I spent at the ashram in June 1942, it became obvious that Gandhi was determined to launch a

civil disobedience campaign with a view to making England 'Quit India'. That was to be the slogan.

Gandhi felt that unless England purged herself by leaving India the war could not be won and the peace could not be won.

One afternoon, after Gandhi had talked at length about the reasons that were prompting him to start civil disobedience against the British government, I said, 'It seems to me that the British cannot possibly quit India altogether. That would mean making a present of India to Japan; England would never agree, nor would the United States approve. If you demand that the British pack up and go bag and baggage, you are simply asking the impossible; you are barking up a tree. You do not mean, do you, that they must also withdraw their armies?'

For at least two minutes Gandhi said nothing. The silence in the room was almost audible.

'You are right,' Gandhi said at last. 'No, Britain and America and other countries too can keep their armies here and use Indian territory as a base for military operations. I do not wish Japan to win the war. But I am sure that Britain cannot win unless the Indian people become free. Britain is weaker and Britain is morally indefensible while she rules India. I do not wish to humiliate England.'

'But if India is to be used as a military base by the democracies, many other things are involved. Armies do not exist in a vacuum. For instance, the western allies would need good organization on the railroads.'

'Oh,' he exclaimed, 'they could operate the railroads. They would need order in the ports where they received their supplies. They could not have riots in Bombay and Calcutta. These matters would require co-operation and common effort.'

'Could the terms of this collaboration be set forth in a treaty of alliance?'

'Yes,' he agreed, 'we could have a written agreement....'

'Why have you not said this?' I asked. 'I must confess that when I heard of your proposed civil disobedience movement I was prejudiced against it. I believe that it would impede the prosecution of the war. I think the war has to be fought and won. I see complete darkness for the world if the Axis wins. I think we have a chance for a better world if we win.'

'There I cannot quite agree,' he argued. 'Britain often cloaks herself in the cloth of hypocrisy, promising what she later does not deliver. But I accept the proposition that there is a better chance if the democracies win.'

'It depends on the kind of peace we make,' I said.

'It depends on what you do during the war,' he corrected. 'I am not interested in future promises. I am not interested in independence after the war. I want independence now. That will help England win the war.'

'Why,' I again inquired, 'have you not communicated your plan to the Viceroy? He should be told that you have no objection now to the use of India as a base for Allied military operations.'

'No one has asked me,' he replied weakly.

Several of Gandhi's most intimate disciples were unhappy over his readiness to tolerate British and other armed forces in India. They felt his statement to me a serious blunder. He himself admitted publicly that he had changed his mind. 'There was obviously a gap in my first writing,' he said in *Harijan* shortly after my interview with him. 'I filled it in as soon as it was discovered by one of my numerous interviewers. Non-violence demands the strictest honesty, cost what it may. The public have therefore to suffer my weakness, if weakness it be. I could not be

guilty of asking the Allies to take a step which would involve certain defeat... Abrupt withdrawal of the Allied troops might result in Japan's occupation of India and China's sure fall. I had not the remotest idea of any such catastrophe resulting from my action....'

Before I left the ashram Mahadev Desai asked me to tell the Viceroy that Gandhi wished to see him. The Mahatma was prepared to compromise and perhaps to abandon the projected civil disobedience movement. In New Delhi, later, I received a letter from Gandhi for transmission to President Roosevelt. The accompanying note said, characteristically, 'If it does not commend itself to you, you may tear it to pieces.'

He was malleable. 'Tell your President I wish to be dissuaded,' he told me. He was deeply convinced, however, that India should be granted self-government during the war; if the anti-Axis powers did not understand this he would call it to their attention by a civil disobedience campaign. 'Your President,' Gandhi declared one afternoon, 'talks about the Four Freedoms. Do they include the freedom to be free?'

Gandhi felt that the democratic position on India was morally indefensible. Roosevelt or Linlithgow could dissuade him by changing the position. Otherwise he had no doubts. Nehru and Ázad did. Rajagopalachari had resigned from the Congress leadership because of his differences with the Mahatma. Gandhi could not be shaken. He convinced Nehru and Azad. Nehru had considered the foreign and domestic situation inopportune. 'I argued with him for days together,' Gandhi reported. 'He fought against my position with a passion which I have no words to describe.' Nehru's personal contacts, Gandhi explained, 'make him feel much more the misery of the impending ruin of China and Russia... In that misery he tried to

forget his old quarrel with [British] imperialism'. But before Nehru left the ashram 'the logic of facts', as Gandhi put it, 'overwhelmed him'. Indeed, Nehru became such a staunch supporter of the proposed civil disobedience campaign that when I asked him subsequently in Bombay whether Gandhi ought to see the Viceroy, he replied, 'No, what for?' Gandhi was still hoping for an audience with Linlithgow.

I left the ashram on June 10th in the car that took Azad and Nehru to the Congress hostel in Wardha. Several hours later, the car returned to Sevagram to fetch Gandhi for further consultations with the two Congress leaders. At three in the afternoon, Gandhi entered the hostel alone. Three-quarters of a mile from Wardha the car had broken down. Gandhi got out and walked the distance in the broiling Indian afternoon June sun. When he reached the house he was in a gay mood; if he suffered from fatigue it was not noticeable and must have retreated before the pleasure of being able to comment on the unreliability of 'these new-fangled technical achievements of the industrial age'.

He had great charm. He was a remarkable natural phenomenon, quiet and insidiously overwhelming. Intellectual contact with him was a delight because he opened his mind and allowed one to see how the machine worked. He did not attempt to express his ideas in finished form. He thought aloud; he revealed each step in his thinking. You heard not only words but also his thoughts. You could therefore follow him as he moved to a conclusion. This prevented him from talking like a propagandist; he talked like a friend. He was interested in an exchange of views, but much more in the establishment of a personal relationship.

Even when evasive Gandhi was frank. I was asking

him about his dreams of the post-independence India. He argued back and forth. 'You want to force me into an admission,' he said, 'that we would need rapid industrialization. I will not be forced into such an admission. Our first problem is to get rid of British rule. Then we will be free, without restraints from the outside, to do what India requires. The British have seen fit to allow us to have some factories and also to prohibit other factories. No, for me the paramount problem is the ending of British domination.'

That, obviously, was what he wanted to talk about; he did not conceal his desire. His brain had no blue pencil. He said, for instance, that he would go to Japan to try to end the war. He knew, and immediately added, that he would never get an opportunity to go and, if he went, Japan would not make peace. He knew too that his statement would be misinterpreted. Then why did he make it? Because he thought it.

Gandhi asserted that a federal administration would be unnecessary in an independent India. I pointed out the difficulties that would arise in the absence of a federal administration. He was not convinced. I was baffled. Finally he said, 'I know that despite my personal views there will be a central government.' This was a characteristic Gandhi cycle: he enunciated a principle, defended it, then admitted with a laugh that it was unworkable. In negotiation, this faculty could be extremely irritating and time-wasting. In personal conversation, it was attractive and even exciting. He himself was sometimes surprised at the things he said. His thinking was fluid. Most persons like to be proved right. So did Gandhi. But frequently he snatched a victory out of an error by admitting it.

Old people are prone to reminiscences. Lloyd George would commence to answer a question on current events

and soon be talking about his conduct of the first World War or a campaign for social reform early in the century. At seventy-three, Gandhi never reminisced. His mind was on things to come. Years did not matter to him because he thought in terms of the unending future. Only the hours mattered because they were the measure of what he could contribute to that future.

Gandhi had more than influence, he had authority, which is less yet better than power. Power is the attribute of a machine; authority is the attribute of a person. Statesmen are varying combinations of both. The dictator's constant accretion of power, which he must inevitably abu steadily robs him of authority. Gandhi's rejection of power enhanced his authority. Power feeds on the blood and tears of its victims. Authority is fed by service, sympathy and affection.

One evening, I watched Mahadev Desai spin. I said I had been listening carefully to Gandhi and studying my notes and wondering all the time what was the source of his hold on people; I had come to the tentative conclusion that it was his passion.

'That is right,' Desai said.

'What is the root of his passion?' I asked.

'This passion,' Desai explained, 'is the sublimation of all the passions that flesh is heir to.'

'Sex?'

'Sex and anger and personal ambition . . . Gandhi is under his own complete control. That generates tremendous energy and passion.'

It was a subdued, purring passion. He had a soft intensity, a tender firmness and an impatience cotton-wooled in patience. Gandhi's colleagues and the British sometimes resented his intensity, firmness and impatience. But

he retained their respect, often their love, through his softness, tenderness and patience.

Gandhi sought approval; he was very happy when the great Tagore agreed with him. But he could defy the whole world and his political next-of-kin.

Gandhi was a strong individual, and his strength lay in the richness of his personality, not in the multitude of his possessions. His goal was To be, not To have. Happiness came to him through self-realization. Fearing nothing, he could live the truth. Having nothing, he could pay for his principles.

Mahatma Gandhi is the symbol of the unity between personal morality and public action. When conscience dwells at home but not in the workshop, office, classroom and market-place, the road is wide open to corruption and cruelty and to dictatorship.

Gandhi enriched politics with ethics. He faced each morning's issues in the light of eternal and universal values. He always distilled a permanent element out of the ephemeral. Gandhi thus broke through the framework of usual assumptions which cramp a man's action. He discovered a new dimension of action. Unconfined by considerations of personal success or comfort, he split the social atom and found a new source of energy. It gave him weapons of attack against which there was often no defence. His greatness lay in doing what everybody could do but doesn't.

'Perhaps he will not succeed,' Tagore wrote of the living Gandhi. 'Perhaps he will fail as the Buddha failed and as Christ failed to wean men from their iniquities, but he will always be remembered as one who made his life a lesson for all ages to come.'

CHAPTER X

WILL-POWER

In May, June and July 1942, one felt a suffocating airlessness in India. Indians seemed desperate. British generals, U.S. General Joseph W. Stilwell and a small armed remnant, and thousands of Indian refugees were straggling out of Burma to escape the conquering Japanese. Japan was next door to India. England apparently lacked the strength to protect India from invasion. Vocal Indians were irritated and exasperated by their utter helplessness. There was the national emergency; tension was mounting; danger threatened; opportunity knocked; but Indians had no voice and no power to act.

Gandhi found the situation intolerable. Resignation was alien to his nature. He believed and had taught a vast following that Indians must shape their own destiny.

The Cripps mission awakened many hopes; India might gain the right to guide her fate. Now the hopes were dashed. Indians were to be supine spectators in an hour of decision. Anger swept the country.

In the light of subsequent events, it appears clear that 1942 or 1943 or 1944 was the best time to grant India independence. For, since Britain and other United Nations would keep their troops in the country as long as the war lasted, the transfer of power to a provisional Indian government could be achieved smoothly and with the least likelihood of riots, chaos, or attempts at a separate peace with Japan. Real power would remain in British hands. This would have avoided the hundreds of thousands of deaths and the millions of human torments and tragedies which attended the liberation of India in 1947.

Gandhi could not have foreseen the black future, but he did sense the urgent need of an immediate change. He was determined to exert maximum pressure on England for the

early establishment of an independent national government.

Gandhi's formula was: 'not to put any obstacle in the way of the British forces'; not to assist the British actively; and to offer complete passive resistance to the Japanese.

'If the Japanese come,' Indians asked, 'how are we to resist them non-violently?'

'Neither food nor shelter is to be given', Gandhi replied in the June 14th, 1942, *Harijan*, 'nor are any dealings to be established with them. They should be made to feel that they are not wanted. But of course things are not going to happen quite so smoothly as the question implies. It is a superstition to think that they will come as friendlies ... If the people cannot resist fierce attack and are afraid of death, they must evacuate the infested place in order to deny compulsory service to the enemy.'

On July 26th, answering similar questions in *Harijan*, Gandhi wrote, 'I would rather be shot than submit to Japanese or any other power.' He recommended the same preference to his friends.

Gandhi, the absolute pacifist, would have wished India to give an unprecedented demonstration of a successful non-violent defeat of an invading army. Yet he was not so unrealistic as to forget that a fierce war to the death of countries raged. In *Harijan* of June 14th, 1942, Gandhi declared, 'Assuming that the National government is formed and if it answers my expectations, its first act would be to enter into a treaty with the United Nations for defensive operations against aggressive powers, it being common cause that India will have nothing to do with any of the Fascist powers and India would be morally bound to help the United Nations.'

Asked by Reuters in London to amplify this encouraging pronouncement, Gandhi cabled, 'There can be no limit to what friendly independent India can do. I had in mind a

treaty between the United Nations and India for the defence of China against Japanese aggression.'

Would Gandhi, then, assist the war effort? No. United Nations armies would be tolerated on Indian soil and Indians could enlist in the British Army or render other help. But if he had anything to say, the Indian Army would be disbanded and the new Indian national government would use 'all its power, prestige and resources' to bring about world peace.

Did he expect this to happen? No. 'After the formation of the National Government', he said, 'my voice may be a voice in the wilderness and nationalist India may go war-mad.'

Nationalist India might well have gone 'war-mad' if only to shake off the oppressive frustration of inaction. Nehru, Azad and Rajagopalachari were eager to have a national government for its own sake, to be sure, but also in order to fight the war. They were militantly anti-fascist. Nehru said, 'We would fight in every way possible with non-violence and with arms, by making it a people's war, by raising a people's army, by increasing production ...' But if Britain did not enable them to do these things, they must continue the struggle for independence. 'Passivity on our part at this moment', Nehru declared, 'would be suicidal ... It would destroy and emasculate us.' Fear of India's emasculation was an everpresent motive. 'Today the whole of India is impotent,' Gandhi complained in the same context. In different ways, both Nehru and Gandhi were concerned with building up the manhood of their people. Gandhi wanted to give them inner strength through confidence. He inspired that feeling in his Indian and foreign visitors.

As the summer of 1942 wore on, it became clear that London would not depart from the spurned Cripps pro-

posal. Nehru had waited for a sign from Washington; he had hoped Roosevelt would prevail upon Churchill to make another move in India. No sign came. Some Congressmen wondered whether the country would respond to a call for civil disobedience, and some feared that it would respond violently. Gandhi had no doubts. He was registering a nation's blind urge to self-assertion.

He did not contemplate the overthrow of the British government. 'A non-violent revolution,' he explained, 'is not a programme of seizure of power. It is a programme of transformation of relationships ending in a peaceful transfer of power....'

'British rule in India must end immediately,' the Working Committee of Congress resolved in Wardha on July 14th; foreign domination 'even at its best' is an evil and a 'continuing injury'. The frustration left by the Cripps Mission 'has resulted in a rapid and widespread increase of ill-will against Britain and a growing satisfaction at the success of Japanese arms. The Working Committee view this development with grave apprehension, as this, unless checked, will inevitably lead to a passive acceptance of aggression. The Committee hold that all aggression must be resisted...The Congress would change the present ill-will against Britain into good-will and make India a willing partner in a joint enterprise... This is only possible if India feels the glow of freedom'.

Congress, the resolution continued, did not wish to embarrass the Allied powers; it is therefore 'agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the Allies in India....'

If this appeal failed, the resolution concluded, Congress will 'be reluctantly compelled' to start a civil disobedience campaign which 'would inevitably be under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi'.

The resolution still required the approval of the larger All-India Congress Committee summoned to convene in Bombay early in August. From Sevagram, meanwhile, Gandhi issued an appeal 'To Every Japanese'. 'I must confess', he began, 'that though I have no ill-will against you, I intensely dislike your attack upon China ... you have descended to imperial ambition. You will fail to realize that ambition and may become the authors of the dismemberment of Asia, thus unwittingly preventing world federation and brotherhood without which there can be no hope for humanity.'

He warned Tokyo not to exploit the situation to invade India. 'You will be sadly disillusioned if you believe that you will receive a willing welcome from India ... we will not fail in resisting you with all the might that our country can muster....'

Then he went to Bombay. To A. T. Steele, of the *New York Herald Tribune*, Gandhi said, 'If anybody could convince me that in the midst of war, the British government cannot declare India free without jeopardizing the war effort, I should like to hear the argument.'

'If you were convinced,' Steele asked, 'would you call off the campaign?'

'Of course,' Gandhi replied. 'My complaint is that all these good people talk *at* me, swear *at* me, but never condescend to talk *to* me.'

Linlithgow had talked to him in 1939 and 1940, but not thereafter.

Several hundred Congress leaders assembled for the A.I.C.C. session on August 7th, and after deliberating all day of the 7th and 8th, they adopted a slightly modified version of the Wardha resolution; they dotted one *i* by declaring that an Indian government would resist aggression 'with all the armed as well as the non-violent forces at its

command'—this was an un-Gandhian touch inserted by the Nehru-Azad school—and crossed one bridge before they reached it by cautioning the Congress rank and file that if their leaders were arrested and prevented from issuing instructions they must obey the general instructions which read, 'non-violence is the basis of this movement'.

Shortly after midnight of August 8th, Gandhi addressed the A.I.C.C. delegates. 'The actual struggle does not commence this very moment,' he emphasized. 'You have merely placed certain powers in my hands. My first act will be to wait upon His Excellency the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. This may take two or three weeks. What are you to do in the meanwhile? I will tell you. There is the spinning wheel . . . But there is something more you have to do . . .Every one of you should, from this very moment, consider himself a free man or woman and even act as if you are free and no longer under the heel of this imperialism . . .' He was reversing the materialistic concept that conditions determine psychology. No, psychology could shape conditions. 'What you think, you become,' he once said.

The delegates went home to sleep. Gandhi, Nehru and scores of others were awakened by the police a few hours later — before sunrise — and carried off to prison. Gandhi was sent into a palace of the Aga Khan at Yeravda, near Poona. Mrs. Naidu, Mirabehn, Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal Nayyar, arrested at the same time, were quartered with him. The next day, Kasturbai got herself arrested by announcing that she would address a meeting in Bombay at which Gandhi had been scheduled to speak. She and Dr. Sushila Nayyar, who had been giving her medical care, joined the Gandhi jail company. The British were very accommodating.

In an interview with the Viceroy after my week with Gandhi I conveyed the message entrusted to me at Sevagram: Gandhi wished to talk with Linlithgow. The Viceroy replied, 'That is a matter of high policy and will have to be considered on its merits'; 1942 was Churchill's first opportunity in office to cope with a civil disobedience movement in India. The British government preferred suppression to discussion.

The moment the prison doors closed behind Gandhi the sluice gates of violence opened. Police stations and government buildings were set on fire, telegraph lines destroyed, railroad ties pulled up and British officials assaulted; a number were killed. Individuals and groups dedicated to destruction roamed the countryside. Soon a powerful underground movement sprang into existence led, in most cases, by members of the Socialist party, a segment of the Congress party. Socialist leaders Jaiprakash Narayan, Mrs. Aruna Asaf Ali and others, political children of Gandhi but recent students of Karl Marx, acquired the halos of heroes as they moved secretly across the land fomenting rebellion. Staid citizens harboured and financed them while the British police hunted them. His Majesty's writ no longer ran and his officials no longer appeared in many areas where Indians set up independent village, town and district governments. These were, in most cases, skeleton structures whose propaganda value exceeded their administrative effectiveness. Yet in some regions, notably in Tilak's traditionally militant Maharashtra, it was not till 1944 that the British returned to rule.

Even Gandhi was in a bellicose mood. With that irrepressible ability to take the centre of the stage, the jailed Mahatma's personality broke through the walls of the Aga Khan's desolate palace and besieged the mind

first of the British government and then of the Indian people.

He was no sooner in jail than he wrote a letter to Sir Roger Lumley, the governor of Bombay, protesting against his own transportation from the train to the prison by car while his comrades went by motor truck. He wanted no privileges, he said, 'except for the special food'. The palace, he wrote, was 'commodious'; could not Sardar Patel, who had been ill, and his daughter who nursed him, be moved into it? The final point: on the train he had seen in a paper the Government's justification of its policy; it contained 'some grossly inaccurate statements which I ought to be allowed to correct. This and similar things I cannot do, unless I know what is going on outside the jail'. Yet newspapers had been forbidden to him.

Lumley's secretary replied he could not have newspapers or Patel. He might write personal letters to his family.

Didn't the Government know, Gandhi answered, that 'for over thirty-five years I have ceased to live a family life' and had been living an ashram life? He wanted to be in touch with the various voluntary organizations he had founded for Harijan uplift, khadi, the development of a national language, etc. The Government then made a concession: he could write to ashram members on personal questions but not about the organizations. Gandhi refused to avail himself of the privilege.

Gandhi now turned on the Viceroy. Ever since President Roosevelt's intervention in the Indian crisis and Churchill's offer to 'assuage' United States public opinion by resigning, a gigantic propaganda battle had been going on to win American approval of British policy in India. Gandhi knew this. In his first letter from jail to the Viceroy on August 14th, Gandhi accused the Government

of 'distortions and misrepresentations.' The letter was many pages long. Linlithgow, addressing 'Dear Mr. Gandhi', answered in a paragraph that 'it would not be possible for me either to accept your criticism or change the policy.'

Gandhi waited several months. On New Year's Eve, 1942, he wrote, 'Dear Lord Linlithgow, This is a very personal letter . . . I must not allow the old year to expire without disburdening myself of what is rankling in my breast against you. I have thought we were friends . . . However what has happened since August 9th makes me wonder whether you still regard me as a friend. I have not perhaps come in such close touch with any occupant of your throne as with you.' Then he voiced what apparently hurt him most: 'Why did you not, before taking drastic action, send for me, tell me your suspicions and make yourself sure of your facts? I am quite capable of seeing myself as others see me.' The Government had made the charge that he was responsible for the violence throughout the country and expected him to condemn it. How could he when he had only the official version? By accusing him without giving him freedom to reply, by holding him and his followers in prison despite their good intentions, the Government had 'wronged innocent men'.

Therefore, Gandhi concluded, he had decided to 'crucify the flesh by fasting.' This was a last resort and he would be glad not to fast. 'Convince me of my error or errors and I shall make ample amends. You can send for me . . . There are many other ways if you have the will . . . May the New Year bring peace to us all! I am, Your sincere friend, M. K. Gandhi.'

The Viceroy received this letter fourteen days later; minor officials had delayed it. He answered in a letter marked 'Personal'. It was a two-page letter. Newspapers

had been supplied to Gandhi's prison after the early period without them. He knew of the arson and murders. Linlithgow was therefore 'profoundly depressed . . . that no word of condemnation for that violence and crime should have come from you'. If Gandhi wished to dissociate himself from these acts 'You know me well enough after these many years to believe that I shall be only too concerned to read with the same close attention as ever any message which I receive from you . . . Your sincerely, Linlithgow.'

'I had almost despaired of ever hearing from you,' Gandhi's reply began. 'Please excuse my impatience. Your letter gladdens me to find that I have not lost caste with you. My letter of December 31st was a growl against you. Yours is a counter-growl . . . Of course I deplore the happenings that have taken place since August 9th. But have I not laid the blame for them at the door of the Government of India? Moreover, I could not express any opinion on events which I cannot influence or control and of which I have but a one-sided account . . . I am certain that nothing but good could have resulted if you had stayed your hand and granted me the interview which I had announced, on the night of August 8th, I was to seek . . . convince me that I was wrong and I will make ample amends. . . .'

Linlithgow responded quickly saying he had no choice 'but to regard the Congress movement and you as its authorized and fully empowered spokesman . . . as responsible for the sad campaign of violence and crime'. He repelled Gandhi's charge that the Government was at fault. He asked the Mahatma to 'repudiate or dissociate yourself from the resolution of August 8th and the policy which the resolution represents' and to 'give me appropriate assurances as regards the future . . .' He had asked the Governor of Bombay to forward Gandhi's letter without delay.

It was the Government, Gandhi's return letter stated, that 'goaded the people to the point of madness'. The Congress resolution of August 8th was friendly to the United Nations and to England. The Government's violence was 'leonine'. The arrests started the trouble. Yet the Viceroy blamed him for the violence though he had worked all his life for non-violence. 'If then I cannot get soothing balm for my pain, I must resort to the law prescribed for Satyagrahis, namely, a fast according to capacity.' It would commence on February 9th and end twenty-one days later. 'Usually, during my fasts, I take water with the addition of salt. But nowadays, my system refuses water. This time therefore I propose to add juices of citrus fruit to make water drinkable. For my wish is not to fast unto death, but to survive the ordeal, if God so wills. The fast can be ended sooner by the government giving the needed relief.'

The Viceroy replied immediately, on February 5th, with a many-page letter. He still held Congress responsible for 'the lamentable disorders'. Sir Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member of Linlithgow Executive Council, had made a full statement of this charge in the assembly and this would be sent to the prisoner. The letter reiterated the charge and added details. 'Let me in conclusion say how greatly I regret, having regard to your health and age, the decision' to fast. He hoped he would not fast. But it was Gandhi's responsibility. 'I regard the use of a fast for political purposes as a form of political blackmail for which there is no moral justification, and understood from your own previous writings that this was also your view.'

Besides, Gandhi had written that one may fast only against those who love you, not against a tyrant.

By return post, Gandhi denied that his decision to fast was contrary to his previous writings. 'I wonder whether

you yourself have read those writings...Despite your description of it as "a form of political blackmail", it is on my part an appeal to the Highest Tribunal for justice which I have failed to secure from you. If I do not survive the ordeal I shall go to the Judgment Seat with the fullest faith in my innocence. Posterity will judge between you as a representative of an all-powerful government and me a humble man who tried to serve his country and humanity through it.'

Two days before the fast was to commence the Government offered to release Gandhi for its duration. He and his associates in prison could go wherever they liked. Gandhi refused. If he was released, he said, he would not fast. Thereupon, the Government announced that he would be responsible for any results; meanwhile, he could invite into the jail any doctors he wanted to have and also friends from the outside.

The fast commenced on February 10th, 1943; a day later than scheduled. The first day he was quite cheerful and for two days he took his customary morning and evening half-hour walks. But soon the bulletins became increasingly disquieting. On the sixth day, six physicians, including British official doctors, stated that Gandhi's condition had 'further deteriorated'. The next morning Sir Homi Mody, Mr. N. R. Sarker and Mr. Aney, three Indians in the Viceroy's Executive Council, whose membership indicated their pro-government and anti-Congress attitude, resigned from the Council in protest against the government accusations which had caused Gandhi to undertake the fast. A debate on the fast took place in the Central Legislature. From all over the country, the Government was bombarded with demands to release the Mahatma. Eleven days after the fast began, Linlithgow rejected all suggestions to liberate Gandhi.

Dr. B. C. Roy came from Calcutta to attend Gandhi. The British physicians urged intravenous feedings to save the Mahatma. The Indian physicians said it would kill him; he objected to injections. The body could reject medicines taken orally, Gandhi always argued, but it was helpless before injections, and his mind therefore rebelled against them; they were violence.

Crowds gathered around Yeravda. The Government allowed the public to come into the palace grounds and file through Gandhi's room. Devadas and Ramdas, his sons, arrived.

Horace Alexander, the British Friend, attempted to intervene with the Government. He was rebuffed. Mr. Aney, who had just resigned from the Viceroy's Council, visited the sinking Mahatma.

Gandhi had been taking water without salt or fruit juice. Nausea plagued him. His kidneys began to fail and his blood became thick. On the thirteenth day of the fast the pulse grew feeble and his skin was cold and moist. Kasturbai knelt before a sacred plant and prayed; she thought his death was near.

Finally, the Mahatma was persuaded to mix a few drops of fresh moosambi fruit juice with the drinking water. Vomiting stopped; he became more cheerful.

On March 2nd, Kasturbai handed him a glass containing six ounces of orange juice diluted with water. He sipped it for twenty minutes. He thanked the doctors and cried copiously while doing so. He lived on orange juice for the next four days and then went on a diet of goat's milk, fruit juice and fruit pulp. His health improved slowly.

India's prominent non-Congress leaders now started agitating for Gandhi's release and for a new government policy of conciliation. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and others asked permission to see Gandhi; Linlithgow refused.

On April 25th, William Phillips, Roosevelt's personal envoy in India and former United States Under-Secretary of State, said to foreign correspondents before leaving for home, 'I should have liked to meet and talk with Mr. Gandhi. I requested the appropriate authorities for permission to do so and I was informed that they were unable to grant the necessary permission.'

Linlithgow's behaviour had induced unwonted bitterness in Gandhi, and when the Viceroy, whose usual five-year term had been prolonged because of the war emergency, was finally preparing to leave India, Gandhi wrote to him on September 27th, 1943, as follows:

Dear Lord Linlithgow, On the eve of your departure from India I would like to send you a word.
Of all the high functionaries I have had the honour of knowing none has been the cause of such deep sorrow to me as you have been. It has cut me to the quick to have to think of you as having countenanced untruth, and that regarding one whom you at one time considered your friend. I hope and pray that God will some day put it into your heart to realize that you, a representative of a great nation, have been led into a grievous error. With good wishes, I still remain your friend, M. K. Gandhi.

Linlithgow replied on October 7th:

Dear Mr. Gandhi, I have received your letter of September 27th. I am indeed sorry that your feelings about any deeds or words of mine should be as you describe. But I must be allowed, as gently as I may, to make plain to you that I am quite unable to accept your interpretation of the events in question.

As for the corrective virtues of time and reflection,

evidently they are ubiquitous in their operation and wisely to be rejected by no man. I am sincerely, Linlithgow.

Before and after the fast, Gandhi wrote long letters, some of which were of pamphlet length, to Sir Reginald Maxwell, Lord (formerly Sir Herbert) Samuel and others, seeking to controvert their public assertions about events and conditions in India. But none of them was published and his letter to Samuel, sent on May 15th, 1943, was not delivered in London until July 25th, 1944. Throughout, Gandhi continued to maintain that he could 'accept no responsibility for the unfortunate happenings' in India, that he was neither anti-British nor pro-Japanese and that he could have been dissuaded from taking any steps against the Government.

The facts are: Gandhi never launched the civil disobedience movement. Congress had merely authorized him to launch it, but he had stated that it would not begin until he gave the order. First he would seek an interview with the Viceroy. The country was in a violent mood; Gandhi knew it; conceivably he might have chosen a form of civil disobedience, like the Salt March, which did not lend itself to mass violence. Had Gandhi remained at liberty he might have prevented his followers from engaging in the destruction of property and persons. He might have fasted against them. At least, he could have curbed the general violence. He would not have added to it. The British gained nothing from Gandhi's arrest except the satisfaction, tempered by headaches, of having him under lock and key. Gandhi's freedom would have mollified many Indians. His arrest inflamed them. It deepened the wide-spread impression that England did not intend to part with power in India. Hence the revolt. It was intensified by the 1943 famine in Bengal in which, accord-

ing to British official figures, a million and a half Indians died. Indians said the Government might have prevented the famine or, at a minimum, undertaken emergency feeding. That was one of Wavell's first steps on ascending the Viceroy's throne in October 1943.

For Gandhi, this stay in prison was an unrelieved tragedy. The widespread violence and his inability to deal with it made him unhappy. The Government's accusation that he was to blame for the disturbances when it knew his devotion to non-violence and when it knew that he had never actually started civil disobedience impressed him as unfair and untrue; the injustice pained him. It was to protest against the charge—not to force the British to release him—that he had fasted. A perfect yogi might have remained indifferent to what others said. Gandhi was not completely detached.

The tragedy was deepened by personal loss. Six days after Gandhi entered the Aga Khan's palace, Mahadev Desai, who was arrested with him, had a sudden heart attack and lost consciousness. 'Mahadev, Mahadev,' Gandhi called.

'If only he would open his eyes and look at me he would not die,' Gandhi said.

'Mahadev, look, Bapu is calling you,' Kasturbai exclaimed.

But it was the end.

Mahadev Desai, who was past fifty, had served Gandhi devotedly and efficiently for twenty-four years as secretary, adviser, chronicler, friend and son. The Mahatma was stunned by the death. He went daily to the spot in the palace grounds where the ashes were buried.

Soon a still greater personal sorrow overtook Gandhi.

Gandhi spent much time in prison teaching his wife Indian geography and other subjects. She failed, however,

to memorize the names of the rivers of the Punjab, and on examination by Gandhi she said Lahore, which is the capital of the Punjab, was the capital of Calcutta, a city which is the capital of Bengal. He had little success in his persistent efforts to improve her reading and writing of Gujarati. She was seventy-four.

Ba, or Mother, as everybody called Mrs. Gandhi, still paid homage to Brahmans for their high-caste status and regarded them as possessing special endowments; she asked one Brahman who worked in the jail when they would be released. But she had rid herself of anti-untouchable prejudices, was a regular spinner and a sincere but not uncritical Gandhian. One day she was annoyed with Gandhi and said to him, 'Didn't I tell you not to pick a quarrel with the mighty Government? You did not listen to me and now we all have to pay the penalty. The Government is using its limitless strength to crush the people.'

'Then what do you want me to do . . . write to the Government and ask for their forgiveness?'

No, she did not ask that. But, she exclaimed, 'Why do you ask the British to leave India? Our country is vast. We can all live there. Let them stay if they like, but let them stay as brothers.'

'What else have I done?' Gandhi replied. 'I want them to go as rulers. Once they cease to be our rulers, we have no quarrel with them.'

Ah, yes, she agreed with that. She apparently worshipped him without understanding.

Kasturbai had been ailing, and in December 1943 she became seriously ill with chronic bronchitis. Dr. Gilder and Dr. Nayyar tended her, but she asked for Dr. Dinshah Mehta, a nature cure expert who had treated Gandhi, and an Ayurvedic or Indian-medicine practitioner. In deference to her wishes, Gandhi bombarded the Government

with letters to admit them. The practitioner tried all his art for a number of days during which the modern-medicine physicians withdrew from the patient. When he confessed defeat, Dr. Gilder, Dr. Nayyar and Dr. Jivraj Mehta resumed their efforts, but they too failed. The Government gave permission for her sons and grandsons to visit her. Ba especially asked for her first-born, Hiralal, who had been estranged from his parents.

Gandhi sat by his wife's bed for many hours. He ordered all medicines to be stopped and all food except honey and water. It was more important, he said, for her to have peace with God. 'If God wills it,' he said, 'she will pull through, else I would let her go, but I won't drug her any longer.'

Penicillin, then rare in India, was flown from Calcutta; Devadas had insisted on it. 'Why do you not trust God?' Gandhi said to him. 'Do you wish to drug your mother even on her deathbed?'

Gandhi had not known that penicillin was given by injection. On being told, he forbade it. Most of the day, Gandhi sat on her bed, holding her hand. Fellow prisoners sang Hindu hymns. On February 21st Hiralal arrived, summoned hastily by the Government. He was drunk and had to be removed from Kasturbai's presence. She cried and beat her forehead. (Hiralal attended his father's funeral without being recognized and spent that night with Devadas. He died, a derelict, in a tuberculosis hospital in Bombay on June 19th, 1948).

The next day, her head resting in Gandhi's lap, she died. At the funeral, Gandhi offered a prayer borrowed from Hindu, Parsi, Moslem and Christian scriptures. Devadas lit the pyre. The ashes were buried besides those of Mahadev Desai in the prison grounds.

When Gandhi returned from the cremation, he sat on

his bed in silence and then, from time to time, as the thoughts came, he spoke: 'I cannot imagine life without Ba . . . Her passing has left a vacuum which never will be filled . . . We lived together for sixty-two years . . . If I had allowed the penicillin it would not have saved her . . . And she passed away in my lap. Could it be better? I am happy beyond measure.'

Gandhi had been in correspondence on political issues with the new Viceroy, Lord Wavell. Immediately after Kasturbai's death, Wavell said in a letter to the Mahatma, 'I take this opportunity to express to you deep sympathy from my wife and myself at the death of Mrs. Gandhi. We understand what this loss must mean to you after so many years of companionship.'

Gandhi was touched. In his reply he wrote, 'Though for her sake I have welcomed her death as bringing freedom from living agony, I feel the loss more than I had thought I should.' Then he explained their intimate relationship to Wavell, whom he had never met. 'We were a couple outside the ordinary,' he said. Their continence, after the age of thirty-seven, 'knit us together as never before. We ceased to be two different entities . . . The result was that she became truly my *better* half'.

Six weeks after Kasturbai's passing, Gandhi suffered a severe attack of benign tertian malaria, during which he was delirious. Temperature rose to 105. A blood count showed a very high germ content. At first he thought he could cure it with a fruit-juice diet and fasting; he accordingly refused to take quinine. After two days he relented; he took a total of thirty-three grains of quinine in two days and the fever disappeared. In all subsequent examinations, parasites were absent and the malaria never recurred.

On May 3rd Gandhi's physicians issued a bulletin

saying his anaemia was worse and his blood pressure low. 'His general condition is again giving rise to severe anxiety.' Agitation for his release swept India. A heavy armed guard was placed around the prison. At 8 a.m., May 6th, Gandhi and his associates were released. A subsequent analysis showed that he had hookworm (ankylostomiasis) and amoebiasis of the intestines.

This was Gandhi's last time in jail. Altogether, he spent 2089 days in Indian and 249 days in South African prisons.

Gandhi went to Juhu, by the sea near Bombay, where he stayed in the home of Shantikumar Morarji, whose father was from Porbander, Gandhi's birthplace. Mrs. Naidu and Mrs. Pandit, Jawaharlal Nehru's sister, were there at the same time.

Mrs. Morarji suggested that the Mahatma see a moving picture film; he had never seen either a silent movie or a talkie. After some urging, he agreed. *Mission to Moscow* was being exhibited in a nearby suburb. Mechanical equipment and the film were brought to the Morarji home and, together with about one hundred other persons, Gandhi viewed *Mission to Moscow*.

'How did you like it?' Mrs. Morarji asked.

'I didn't like it,' he said. He hadn't liked the ballroom dancing and the women in scanty dresses; he considered it improper.

Friends complained that he had viewed a foreign picture, not one of Indian manufacture. He accordingly saw *Ram Rajya*, based on an ancient legend of an ideal moral king.

For his relaxation, somebody read Gandhi a delightful, tranquil children's book by Pearl S. Buck entitled *The Chinese Children Next Door*.

The doctors were curing Gandhi and he was curing himself with silence, 'medical silence', he called it. At first it was total; after a few weeks, he would speak between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. which was prayer-meeting time.

After several weeks he plunged into work again.

CHAPTER XI

JINNAH AND GANDHI

MOHAMED ALI JINNAH, who considered himself Gandhi's opposite number, lived in a large, crescent-shaped marble mansion from which a classic flight of marble stairs and a series of carefully moulded terraces led down to the sea at Bombay. He had built it during the second World War and he apologized, when I saw him in 1942, that it was still inadequately furnished. His little study, however, and other parts of the great house on Malabar Hill revealed the cultured and opulent touch.

Jinnah was over six feet tall and weighed nine stone. He was a very thin man. His well-shaped head was covered with thick, long, silver-grey hair brushed straight back. His shaven face was thin, the nose long and aquiline. The temples were sunken and the checks were deep holes which made his cheekbones stand out like high horizontal ridges. His teeth were bad. When not speaking, he would pull in his chin, tighten his lips, knit his big brow. The result was a forbidding earnestness. He rarely laughed.

Jinnah wore a knee-length straw-coloured tunic, tight white Indian trousers that clung to his bony legs and black patent-leather pumps. A monocle dangled from a black cord. He often dressed in European clothes. He was, wrote George E. Jones in the *New York Times* of May 5th,

1946, 'undoubtedly one of the best dressed men in the British Empire'.

Jinnah, the first child of a rich skins, hide and gum-arabic merchant, was born on Christmas Day 1876 — seven years later than Gandhi — in the Kathiawar peninsula, Gandhi's birthplace; his native language was Gujarati. 'Jinnah' is a Hindu name; the family were recent converts to Islam. Jinnah was a Khoja Moslem. Many Khojas carry Hindu names and maintain the Hindu joint family system. In the eighteenth and nineenth centuries, the Khojas attempted to return to Hinduism but were rebuffed.

Hinduism and Mohammedanism are dissimilar religions, but Hindus and Mohammedans are far less dissimilar. Most Moslems of India are converted Hindus, converted by the invading Arabs, Afghans and Persians who began thrusting into India during the eighth century. Jinnah said converted Hindus were 75 per cent. of the Moslem community; Nehru put it at 95 per cent. In parts of India, Moslems worship in Hindu temples. There are castes among some Indian Moslems. In many areas, Hindus and Moslems are indistinguishable from one another in appearance, costume, customs and language. Hindi and Urdu, the predominant tongues of Hindus and Moslems respectively, are written with different scripts and the former has absorbed more Sanskrit words while the latter uses more Persian words, but Hindus understand Urdu and Moslems understand Hindi. Hinduism is an insidious, emotional religion, native to India, which clings to the descendants of those who were converted to the *Koran* by the sword. Religious leaders have succeeded in widening the gulf and poisoning the relations, yet ties remain. Jinnah, Gandhi, Nehru, the Viceroy, Wavell and all the British officials, Hindus and Moslems one met in India agreed that Hindus and Moslems lived peacefully side by side in the villages —

and the village is 80 per cent. of India. In the Indian Army, moreover, Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, Christians, in fact all religions and races, ate, slept, trained and waged war side by side without friction.

I suggested to Jinnah that religious hatreds, nationalism and boundaries plagued humanity and had caused the war; the world needed harmony, not new discords.

'You are an idealist,' he replied. 'I am a realist. I deal with what is. Take, for instance, France and Italy. Their customs and religion are the same. Their languages are similar. Yet they are separate.'

'Do you want to create here the mess we have in Europe?' I asked.

'I must deal with the divisive characteristics which exist,' he said.

Jinnah was not a devout Moslem. He drank alcohol and ate pork, which are un-Islamic acts. He seldom visited the mosque and knew no Arabic and little Urdu. In his forties, he went outside his religion to marry a Parsi girl of eighteen; when his only child, a beautiful daughter, married a Parsi turned Christian, he disowned her. His wife left him and died shortly thereafter in 1929. In the remaining years, his sister Fatima, a dental surgeon who looked like him, was his constant companion and adviser. 'Moslem women are the real force behind their men,' she said.

Early in his career, Jinnah tried to unite Hindus and Moslems. On returning from London where he studied law at Lincoln's Inn, and after establishing a lucrative practice in Bombay, he threw himself into politics. Addressing the Moslem League in 1917 on the alleged threat of Hindu domination, he said, 'Fear not. This is a bogey which is put before you to scare you away from the co-operation and unity which are essential to self-government.'

Jinnah was once a leader of the Congress party. 'I have been in this movement for thirty-five years,' he said to me in the first of two interviews at his home. 'Nehru worked under me in the Home-Rule Society. Gandhi worked under me. I was active in the Congress party. When the Moslem League was organized I persuaded Congress to congratulate the League as a step towards Indian freedom. In 1915, I induced the League and Congress to meet at the same time in Bombay so as to create the feeling of unity. My goal was Hindu-Moslem unity. The British, seeing a danger in such unity, broke up an open meeting. The closed sessions, however, continued. In 1916, I again persuaded the two organizations to meet simultaneously in Lucknow and was instrumental in bringing about the Lucknow Pact in which both agreed on elections and weightage. So it was untill 1920 when Gandhi came into the limelight. A deterioration of Hindu-Moslem relations set in. In 1931, at the Round Table Conference, I had the distinct feeling that unity was hopeless, that Gandhi did not want it. I was a disappointed man. I decided to stay in England. I did not even go back to India to sell my possessions but sold them through an agent. I remained in England until 1935. I took up law practice before the Privy Council, and contrary to my expectations, I was a success. I had no intention of returning to India. But each year friends came from India and told me of conditions and told me how much I could do. Finally, I agreed to go back.'

He had been speaking breathlessly, with excitement. He paused, puffed on his cigarette. 'I tell you all this,' he continued, 'to show that Gandhi does not want independence. He does not want the British to go. He is first of all a Hindu. Nehru does not want the British to go. They want Hindu raj.'

Writing 'In Memory of Jinnah', in the London *Economist* of September 17th, 1949, a correspondent, who knew Jinnah well, declared that while Jinnah was practising law in London someone 'repeated to him that Nehru, whom he despised and hated, had imprudently said at a private dinner party that "Jinnah was finished". Outraged, Jinnah packed up and sailed back to India at once just to "show Nehru" . . . To Cleopatra's nose as a factor in history one should perhaps add Jinnah's pride'.

George E. Jones, the *New York Times* correspondent who interviewed Jinnah several times, writes in his book, *Tumult in India,* 'Jinnah is a superb political craftsman, a Machiavelli in the amoral sense of that description . . . His personal defects are a somewhat hostile reserve, conceit and a narrow outlook . . . He is an extremely suspicious man, who feels that he has been wronged many times in his life. His repressed intensity borders on the psychotic. Withdrawn and isolated, Jinnah is arrogant to the point of discourtesy. . . .'

Jinnah withdrew from the Congress party just when Gandhi, backed by the masses, ousted the rich lawyers from control. He never liked Gandhi. At public meetings in those days, he would refer to Gandhi as 'Mr. Gandhi' which most Indians regarded as less respectful than Mahatma or Gandhiji; yet when members of the audience protested he persisted. Later, after he returned to India and became the undisputed leader of the anti-Congress Moslem League, he zealously guarded his prestige. In 1939, upon the outbreak of the war, the Viceroy invited Gandhi and Jinnah to the palace. Gandhi offered to come to Jinnah's house to fetch him. Jinnah welcomed that appearance of the obeisance. But he refused to go in Gandhi's car. They both rode in his.

Subsequently, when they conferred, Jinnah insisted that the meetings take place in his home. Gandhi, who was completely indifferent to such considerations, gladly complied.

Vanity, jealousy and dislike undoubtedly play a major role in politics. Some of the great political feuds of history were personal before they became political. The Hindu-Moslem problem, to be sure, would have existed Jinnah or no Jinnah. His intensity and hates blew on the coals and brought forth flames.

Apart from Jinnah, all the leading figures in his Moslem League were large estate owners and landholding noblemen. They watched the rising tide of peasant discontent with mounting concern. In the North-west Frontier Province, the Congress party, led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the 'Frontier Gandhi', was a popular movement of Moslem peasants directed against Moslem landowners. In the United Provinces, Moslem and Hindu peasants made common cause against Moslem and Hindu landlords.

The landlords who financed the Moslem League used religion to divide Moslem from Hindu peasants.

Owing to Islamic precept, the bulk of Moslem wealth was invested in land instead of trade or industry. Hindu and Parsi business men often preferred to engage their own co-religionists. Mohammedans, moreover, encountered considerable difficulty in entering government employ; their education was usually inferior to that of Hindus, Parsis and Christians. The Moslem urban middle class, which began to emerge in the twentieth century, looked to Jinnah to get them British government jobs, and he did so by persuading the authorities to establish quotas for Moslems irrespective of qualifications.

The Moslem upper class (the landlords) and the

Moslem middle class were ready for Jinnah. But they needed the peasantry for numbers. They soon discovered that they could win it by arousing religious passions. The formula was Pakistan, a separate Moslem state. Such a state would be officered by Moslems and in it Hindu and Parsi firms would be at a disadvantage. The landlords believed they had less to fear from a country they controlled than from an independent, liberal, secular India where a land reform that would dispossess them was expected to be one of the first pieces of legislation.

One hundred million compared to three hundred million Hindus, the Moslems could never hope to win a political majority unless religious aims ceased to dominate politics. The separate religious electorates, introduced by Lord Minto in 1909, militated against such a consummation. In a number of districts, however, — the North-west Frontier, Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, Kashmir and Bengal — Moslems formed a majority. Pakistan, as Jinnah conceived it, would embrace the sixty million Mohammedans thickly settled in these Moslem-majority provinces where they were safe from Hindu domination. But to achieve Pakistan, Jinnah would have to inflame Moslem religious and nationalistic sentiments and risk inflaming in turn similar feelings among Hindus at the cost of the forty million Moslems dispersed in provinces where Hindus were the majority.

Jinnah was prepared to take this plunge.

The irreligious Jinnah wished to build a religious state. Gandhi, wholly religious, wanted a secular state.

The hope of religious peace in India lay in the unifying nationalism written on the Gandhi-Nehru-Azad-Rajagopalachari banner. No doubt, the relations between Hindus and Moslems required adjustments and mutual concessions and depended greatly on economic

expansion which would lessen the competition for government posts and increase business opportunities. Gandhi had enough faith in man to think that, with patience, it could be done.

Jinnah, on the other hand, urged immediate bisection. Herbert L. Matthews, a veteran foreign correspondent of the *New York Times,* quotes a frank admission by Sikander Hyat Khan, the Moslem prime minister of the Punjab, 'that he considered a Bengal Moslem as foreign as a Chinese'. Yet Jinnah believed that the Punjab and Bengal yearned to be one in Pakistan.

The fact is that India, a backward country without adequate communications, still lived in the grip of provincialism, like Europe in the Middle Ages. Gandhi wanted to use the cement of nationalism to make it one; Jinnah wanted to use the dynamite of religion to make it two.

The bisection of India could not be done gently with a surgeon's scalpel. It could only be achieved with a blunt butcher's knife and heavy cleaver, and leave broken bones, mutilated muscles, severed nerves and bruised brain matter robbed of the capacity to think. The partitioning of the United States or France would be no more painful.

The tragedy of partition hung over Gandhi's head from the time of his liberation in 1944 to the day of his death in 1948.

In June 1944 Gandhi, partially recuperated from his illness, came back into the political arena. He asked Viceroy Wavell to receive him. Wavell replied, 'In consideration of the radical difference in our points of view, a meeting between us at present could have no value.'

Gandhi now focused his attention on Jinnah. Gandhi had always felt that if Congress and the Moslem League

came to an agreement, the British would have to grant India independence.

Spurred by Rajagopalachari, who evolved a formula for a Congress-League understanding, Gandhi wrote to Jinnah on July 17th, 1944, suggesting talks. Gandhi addressed Jinnah as 'Brother Jinnah' and signed, 'Your brother, Gandhi'. Jinnah's reply was addressed to 'Dear Mr. Gandhi' and was signed 'M. A. Jinnah'. In subsequent letters, Gandhi addressed Jinnah as 'Qaid-e-Azam' or Great Leader, a recently assumed title. Jinnah still wrote, 'Dear Mr. Gandhi'.

The correspondence was voluminous. Gandhi arrived at Jinnah's Bombay house for the first meeting at 3.55 p.m. on September 9th and remained till 7 p.m. He returned at 5.30 p.m. on 11th and stayed for two hours. The two men conferred a third time on the 12th for two and a half hours, twice on the 13th for a total of three and a half hours, again on the 14th, again on the 15th and so on. After each conversation they wrote long letters to one another confirming and continuing the oral arguments. At one stage, Gandhi suggested that he be allowed to address the executive council of the Moslem League and, if the council rejected his proposal, that he should go before an open convention of the League. Jinnah called the suggestion 'most extraordinary and unprecedented', and repulsed it.

The talks broke down on September 26th and then the entire correspondence was published in the newspapers.

The wall between Gandhi and Jinnah was the two-nation theory. 'By all the canons of international law, we are a nation,' Jinnah wrote. 'We are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilization, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of value and proportion, legal laws and moral codes,

customs and calendar, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions.'

Gandhi did not make an effort to controvert this large statement. He merely said, 'I find no parallel in history for a body of converts and their descendents claiming to be a nation apart from the parent stock.' Do people change their characteristics when they change their religion? Would there be a third nation in India if several million people adopted Christianity and a fourth if several million joined the Jews?

The cleavage on this cardinal issue was known in advance. Then why the discussions?

'Can we not agree to differ on the question of "two nations",' Gandhi pleaded, 'and yet solve the problem on the basis of self-determination?'

Gandhi proposed that Baluchistan, Sind, the North-west Frontier Province where Moslems constituted a majority, and those parts of Bengal, Assam and the Punjab where Moslems were a majority, should vote on whether to secede from the Indian Union. 'If the vote is in favour of separation,' Gandhi explained, 'it shall be agreed upon that these areas shall form a separate state as soon as possible after India is free.' The two states, he urged, would then set up one, unified 'administration of foreign affairs, defence, internal communications, customs, commerce and the like'.

Jinnah said 'No' three times: he wanted the partition while the British were in India, not after India was free; he wanted complete separation with no unified administration; and he had his own remarkable plan for a referendum.

According to Jinnah's plan, only Moslems would vote in the plebiscite and if the majority of the voting Moslems voted for separation then the entire province would go to

Pakistan. 'Separation', according to an analysis of Jinnah's views made by the British Embassy in Washington 'for the information of British officials', 'must be decided on by the votes of Moslems only.'

But the British census gave the Moslem population of Assam as 3,442,479, the non-Moslem 6,762,254. Yet Jinnah was demanding that a majority of the 3,442,479 determine the fate of the entire province.

The Moslem population of the Punjab was 16,217,242, the non-Moslem 12,201,577; the Moslems were not more than 56 per cent. of the total. Actually, two or three million Moslems, at most, would have been entitled to cast votes. And if a majority of the two or three million voted for Pakistan then the entire province of over twenty-eight million would become a part of Pakistan.

In Bengal, Moslems were 52 per cent. of the population. A Moslem majority for secession would necessarily be a minority of the total number of inhabitants.

Gandhi, obviously, could not agree to such a proposition. Jinnah did not have the power to effect it by force. Only the British could give it to him.

'Mr. Jinnah', reads the 'Note on the Gandhi-Jinnah Conversation' compiled by the British Embassy in Washington (Lord Halifax was Ambassador), 'is in a strong position; he has something to give which Mr. Gandhi wants very badly and without delay, Moslem co-operation in putting pressure on the British government to hand over a substantial instalment of power at once . . . Mr. Gandhi, on the other hand, has got nothing to give which Mr. Jinnah is not prepared to wait for; in Mr. Jinnah's eyes, the prospect of independence a year or two earlier is as nothing compared with security for Moslems. It is obvious that Mr. Jinnah is content to wait and see how near Mr. Gandhi will come to the price for which he is holding out.'

This is a shrewd analysis of the tactics of a shrewd bargainer. Jinnah could wait for independence. Gandhi felt this was the best time to get independence.

History now intervened to upset Jinnah's calculations. Then the able Jinnah upset history.

CHAPTER XII

ON THE EVE OF INDEPENDENCE

On August 30th, 1944, Wendell Willkie received me in his law office overlooking New York harbour. He was a good man. His death in September 1944 left America poorer. 'The war is about seven-tenths won,' he said, 'and the peace is about nine-tenths lost.' He had toured the East and noted the perpetuation of old conflicts between Europe and Asia, white man and coloured man, free man and colonial slaves. He realized that there would either be a new world or a new world war.

Others too were beginning to see that war with a dictatorship creates a moral obligation to expand the area of freedom.

The nearer England came to victory the clearer it became that political changes in India could not be delayed.

By 1945, India was too restive to hold, and Britain had suffered too heavily in the war to contemplate the colossal expenditure of men and treasure that would have been required to suppress another non-violent contest with Gandhi or a violent contest if he lost control. The exhaustion which compelled Britain to cut her commitments in Greece, Turkey, the Arab countries and other strategic regions after the war was apparent during the war.

It was especially apparent to Lord Wavell. 'The Indian

administration', Leopold S. Amery, Secretary of State for India, said in the House of Commons on June 14th, 1945, 'overburdened by great tasks laid upon it by the war against Japan and by planning for the post-war period, is further strained by the political tension that exists.' Wavell directed the Indian administration.

Wavell was a general and a poet and an unusual person. During my first talk with him in New Delhi in 1942, I remarked that he looked tired. 'Yes,' he agreed, 'I am tired after three years of military defeats and setbacks.' Then he paid a tribute to Nazi Marshal Rommel who administered the defeats. At each subsequent meeting, Wavell brought the conversation around to Rommel and praised his genius.

Wavell had a body like a solid thick tree trunk. His legs were thick and bent outward. His hair was dense and grey-black. All the wrinkles and deep lines of his gnarled face seemed to end in his blind left eye which was partly open and riveted one's attention. Five rows ribbons made a bright patch on the left breast of his khaki uniform.

He talked philosophy and quoted Matthew Arnold. When I walked with him once in the immense garden behind his house in New Delhi he reminisced about service in the Caucasus during the first World War and sang a verse of 'Allahverdi', a popular Georgian drinking song. He was informal and friendly and did not behave like a commander-in-chief or an imperial administrator.

Wavell's hero was General Allenby under whom he had fought in the first World War. He was writing a long biography of Allenby and allowed me to read part of the neatly typed manuscript tied in red ribbons. The prose was exquisite. The most dramatic episode of the book was Allenby's fierce conflict with the British government

over the political status of Egypt. Allenby was High Commissioner of Egypt after the first World War. While serving in that capaity he became convinced that Britain should end her protectorate and grant Egypt independence. But his pleas from Cairo failed to sway the men in Whitehall. He accordingly appeared in London to face an all-star Cabinet which included Lloyd George, Lord Curzon, Milner and Winston Churchill, all of them opponents of Egyptian independence and 'the most determined', Wavell wrote, 'had been Winston Churchill'. Allenby's arguments did not move the ministers. He threatened to resign. He was the conqueror of Jerusalem, the man who broke the back of the Turks in the war, and had a strong hold, consequently, on the loyalty and imagination of the British people. Lloyd George did not want to risk an open break with Allenby and capitulated.

I wrote to Wavell, 'Lloyd George, Curzon and Churchill probably adduced as plausible objections to the independence of Egypt as those one can hear today in British circles in New Delhi against the independence of India, yet Allenby stood his ground and won. You are convinced that he was right and the Cabinet wrong. Governments are often wrong. The whole history of Europe between 1919 and 1939 is a record of wrong policies. There is little in the recent acts of British Cabinets to suggest that London's present attitude to India is a pillar of wisdom.'

Wavell was then Commander-in-Chief and he limited himself to military affairs. In 1944, however, Churchill appointed him Viceroy.

Wavell went to London in March 1945.

An editorial in *The Times* of March 20th, 1945 summarizing numerous letters in its correspondence columns and its own views said, 'There is a general convic-

tion that it is for this country to resume the political initiative......First, it is proposed that Britain should now begin a gradual remodelling of the structure, staffing and procedure of the governmental machine in preparation for the complete thansfer of power to Indian hands; and, secondly, that the persistence of the antagonisms now sundering the parties and interests of India constitute a reproach to British as well as Indian statesmanship......'

British opinion, even conservative opinion, was deserting Churchill's intransigent stand on India.

Wavell stayed in London for nearly two months. Prophets were predicting a Labour party triumph in the impending British general election. Policy abroad usually reflects politics at home. And Wavell still had four years as Viceroy.

In April 1945, on the eve of the San Francisco Conference to draft the charter of the United Nations, Indian and foreign correspondents sought a statement from Mahatma Gandhi. 'India's nationalism spells internationalism,' he declared.

'There will be no peace for the Allies or the world,' he asserted, 'unless they shed their belief in the efficacy of war and its accompanying terrible deception and fraud, and are determined to hammer out a real peace based on the freedom and equality of all races and nations . . . Freedom of India will demonstrate to all the exploited races of the earth that their freedom is near and that in no case will they henceforth be exploited.

'Peace,' Gandhi added, 'must be just. In order to be that it must neither be punitive nor vindictive. Germany and Japan should not be humiliated. The strong are never vindictive. Therefore the fruits of peace must be shared equally. The effort then will be to turn them into friends. The Allies can prove their democracy by no other means.'

But he feared that behind the San Francisco Conference 'lurk the mistrust and fear which breed war'.

Gandhi saw that freedom was the twin of peace, and fearlessness the parent of both. Who could doubt that India would be free before 1960 and most of south-east Asia as well? Who could doubt that until they were free they could make the West's life a nightmare and Europe's recovery impossible? To prevent another war the victors would have to remove the ills which conduce to the 'rotten world' of which Sumner Welles had spoken.

These ideas were beginning to shape Britain's attitude towards India.

Government policy is like a ticker tape; the old message is still visible when the first words of the new message appear. A country can have two conflicting policies or parts of two conflicting policies. Actually there is no such thing as a government; there are many men and women in a government and some may pull in one direction and some in another.

Wavell brought back to New Delhi the British government's approval of a new plan for India which he broadcast on June 14th. The same day he released Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the president of the Congress party, Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders who had been in prison since the morning of August 9th, 1942. He also summoned India's outstanding politicians to Simla, the summer capital, for June 25th.

Congress leaders showed no bitterness about their long imprisonment without trial. They agreed to come. Jinnah attended as president of the Moslem League and Liaquat Ali Khan as secretary of the League. Khizr Hyat Khan and Kwaja Sir Nazimuddin were invited in their capacity of former prime ministers of their provinces. In addition, Master Tara Singh represented the Sikhs and Mr. Sivaraj

the Harijans. Gandhi was not a delegate but he went to Simla and remained throughout the discussions.

According to the Wavell plan the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief would be the only Englishmen in the Viceroy's Executive Council. All the others would be Indians. Indians would thus take charge of foreign affairs, finance, police, etc.

The Viceroy would appoint the Indian members of his Council but he undertook to do so from list of names submitted by the several parties. The Viceroy would still have the right to veto the decisions of the Council, but he promised publicly that the veto power 'will of course not be exercised unreasonably'. Most politically Indians took him at his word, for if he abused the veto the Indians could withdraw from the Council and forbid any of their party members to succeed them; that would have put an end to the Wavell plan and to government with popular support.

The Simla conference nevertheless failed. Wavell placed the blame on Jinnah.

The plan provided for 'equal proportions of Moslems and Caste Hindus' in the Viceroy's Council. The Congress objected. Congress was a much larger organization than the Moslem League. The whole history of Congress was a battle against differentiating between caste and outcast Hindus. So eager was Congress for a settlement, however, that it accepted the formula.

Wavell, who worked indefatigably at Simla, then asked the party leaders for their lists. All complied except Jinnah. 'I therefore,' Wavell said in a public statement, 'made my provisional selections, including certain Moslem League names . . . When I explained my solution to Mr. Jinnah, he told me that it was not acceptable to the Moslem League, and he was so decided that I felt it would be useless to continue the discussions.'

Jinnah torpedoed the Simla conference for one discernible reason: he insisted that all Moslems in the Viceroy's Council must be designated by him as the leader of the Moslems of India.

The Moslem League had gained strength during the war and won most elections against Moslem candidates who were not in the League. But neither Wavell nor Gandhi, who made Congress policy behind the Simla scenes, could admit Jinnah's claim to represent Moslem India. There were many Moslems in Congress; President Azad was a Moslem and Congress wanted him in the Viceroy's Council. Khizr Hyat Khan, former premier of the Punjab, was anti-Jinnah and anti-Pakistan; so were other outstanding Moslems.

Moreover, Congress would have been untrue to its secular nature and to Gandhi's principles if it had accepted the role of a purely Hindu organization. Congress aspired to be a national not a religious body; it could not allow itself to be identified with one religious community.

On this rock, the Simla conference foundered. The British authorities in India, or Britain, were not ready to act without Jinnah's co-operation.

During the Simla conference, the war in Europe had come to and end. On July 26th, the Labour party decisively defeated the Conservatives; Clement R. Attlee replaced Winston Churchill as Prime Minister.

On August 14th Japan's surrender was accepted by the Powers.

The British Labour government immediately announced that it sought 'an early realization of self-government in India' and summoned Wavell to Whitehall. Their conclusions were announced by Attlee in London and Wavell in New Delhi on September 19th, 1945.

Elections to the central and provincial legislatures were

the first step. Then Wavell would renew his efforts to form an Executive Council supported by the main Indian parties and to restore popular government in the provinces. Guided by the results at the polls, he would convene an assembly to draft constitution for a united India.

The All-India Congress Committee, habitually distrustful, considered the proposals 'vague, inadequate and unsatisfactory'. But the Government was conciliatory; more Congress prisoners were released; three high officers of the Indian National Army who had deserted in Malaya and Burma and joined the Japanese were brought to trial in Delhi Fort, defended by Nehru and other lawyers, sentenced to life imprisonment and then set free.

All parties agreed to contest the elections.

Congress won the overwhelming majority of the non-Moslem seats in the legislatures, the Moslem League the overwhelming majority of the Moslem seats.

The deadlock remained unbroken.

In December 1945, Wavell, speaking in Calcutta appealed to the Indian people to avoid strife and violence when they stood 'at the gate of political and economic opportunity'.

Gandhi was in Calcutta, too. He spent many hours with Richard Casey, the Australian who served as British Governor of Bengal. He also spent an hour with the Viceroy. As he left the Viceroy's house in Calcutta a vast multitude blocked the road and would not allow his car to advance until he had spoken. He stood up in the car and said, 'India has attained her great position in the East because of her message of peace.' Thereupon the crowd opened a corridor for him so that he could drive to his ashram eight miles outside the city. Along the entire route, Indians touched the dust of the road before and after he passed.

The same day, Jinnah made a statement in Bombay.

'We could settle the Indian problem in ten minutes,' he declared, if Mr. Gandhi would say, "I agree that there should be Pakistan; I agree that one-fourth of India, composed of six provinces — Sind, Baluchistan, the Punjab, the North-west Frontier Province, Bengal and Assam — with their present boundaries, constitute the Pakistan state."'

But Gandhi could not say that and did not say it; he regarded the vivisection of India as 'blasphemy'.

CHAPTER XIII

INDIA IN SUSPENSE

GANDHI had been saying that he wanted to live a hundred and twenty-five years but without becoming 'an animated corpse, a burden to one's relations and society'. How would he keep physically fit? He first explained how he had kept physically fit. In 1901 he threw away the medicine bottle and substituted nature cures and regular habits of eating, drinking and sleeping. More important, he developed 'detachment of mind', the key to longevity. 'Everyone,' Gandhi said, 'has a right and should desire to live 125 years while performing service without an eye to result.' Dedication to service and renunciation of the fruits thereof are 'an ineffable joy' a 'nectar' which sustains life. It leaves 'no room for worry or impatience'. Egotism is the killer; unselfishness the life preserver.

The Mahatma now adopted an additional cause: nature cure. He called it his 'latest born'; the older children—khadi, village industries, the development of a national language, food-growing, independence for India, freedom for Indians and world peace—continued to receive his energetic care. For the new baby, a trust was set up with

Gandhi as one of three trustees. Dr. Dinshah Mehta, Gandhi's physician, had a nature-cure clinic in the city of Poona and it was therefore agreed, as the trust's first venture, to expand the clinic into a nature-cure university.

But one silent Monday Gandhi abruptly decided to abandon the project. It 'dawned upon me', he confessed, 'that I was a fool to think that I could ever hope to make an institute for the poor in a town'. He had to carry nature-cure to the poor and not expect the poor to come to him. This mistake had a moral: 'Never take anything for gospel truth even if it comes from a Mahatma unless it appeals to both . . . head and heart.' Gandhi disliked automatic obedience.

He would start nature-cure work in a village; 'that is real India,' he wrote, 'my India, for which I live'. He did so immediately. He settled down for a short while in Uruli, a village of three thousand inhabitants on the Poona-Sholapur railway line with plenty of water, a good climate, fruit farms, a telegraph and post office, but no telephone.

The first day, thirty peasants appeared at the nature cure centre. Gandhi himself examined six. In each case, he prescribed the same thing: the continuous recitation of God's name, sun baths, friction and hip baths, cow's milk, buttermilk, fruit juices and plenty of water. The reciting of God's name, however, should be more than lip movement; it must absorb the entire being throughout the recitation and throughout life. 'All mental and physical ailments,' Gandhi explained simply, 'are due to one common cause. It is therefore but natural that there should be common remedy.' Almost everyone is sick in body or mind, he said. Repeating 'Rama, Rama, Rama, Rama, Rama' while intensively concentrating on godliness, goodness, service and selflessness paves the way for the

remedial functions of mudpacks, sitz baths and massage.

Gandhi was himself a proof of the power of mind and mood over matter.

Gandhi was occupied with health throughout his entire adult life and indeed in his youth when he nursed his dying father. He doctored everyone within reach. Pain in others pained him. He was capable of boundless compassion.

The loving mother fervently yet vainly wishes she could take her child's illness upon herself. Gandhi's fasts were suffering self-inflicted in the hope of alleviating the sufferings of untouchables, strikers, Hindus and Moslems. He did penance for those who inflicted pain.

The inner compulsion to relieve misery and assuage pain comes very close to being Gandhi's deepest urge. It is the kin of love, the root of non-violence, the spur to service. Gandhi believed his mission was to heal. He was India's doctor. The India of the last two years of his life gave him ample work.

There was famine in the land, food and clothing famine. 'Grain and cloth dealers must not hoard, must not speculate,' he wrote on February 17th, 1946. 'Food should be grown on all cultivable areas wherever water is or is made available . . . All ceremonial functions should be stopped. . . .'

He had been wandering over Bengal, Assam and Madras. In one locality, six hundred thousand people came to a meeting. 'Grow More Food' was his slogan. 'Spin,' he begged. 'Every pint of water, whether from bathing and ablutions or from the kitchen should be turned into backyard vegetable beds,' he told townspeople. 'Vegetables could be grown in earthen pots and even in old discarded tins.'

Hunger raised the question of the nation's high birth

rate. 'Let me say,' he stated, 'that propagation of the race rabbit-wise must undoubtedly be stopped, but not so as to bring greater evils in its train. It should be stopped by methods which in themselves ennoble the race,' by 'the sovereign remedy of self-control.'

Shortages provoked looting of shops and other violent outbursts. Heavy rioting took place in Bombay. In Calcutta, Delhi and other cities mobs engaged in arson, compelled passers-by to shout slogans, and forced Englishmen to remove their hats. Gandhi reprimanded them severely. Indian sailors in the British navy in the harbour of Bombay mutinied and were only with difficulty persuaded by Congress leaders to desist.

'Now that it seems we are coming into our own,' Gandhi wrote on February 10th, 1946, 'indiscipline and hooliganism', which were increasing, 'ought to go, and calmness, rigid discipline, co-operation and goodwill must take their place . . . I hug the hope', he continued, 'that when real responsibility comes to the people and the dead weight of a foreign army of occupation is removed, we shall be natural, dignified and restrained....'

'Let me affirm that I love the Englishman as well as the Indian,' he wrote in March.

Prime Minister Attlee announced that a British Cabinet mission, consisting of Lord Pethick-Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India; Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade; and Albert V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, were coming to India to settle the terms of liberation. 'Emphatically,' Gandhi affirmed, 'it betrays want of foresight to disbelieve British declarations and precipitate a quarrel in anticipation. Is the official deputation coming to deceive a great nation? It is neither manly nor womanly to think so.'

The Cabinet Mission arrived from England in New

Delhi on March 23rd and immediately began to interview Indian leaders. Gandhi came to Delhi to meet the British ministers and 'at my request,' writes Pethick-Lawrence, 'in spite of the trying weather conditions in Delhi during the ensuing months, he remained in touch with us and with the Congress Working Committee during the whole progress of the negotiations.' Gandhi stayed in the untouchables' slums where Cripps, Pethick-Lawrence and Alexander, as well as many Indians, visited him regularly. Sometimes, too, Gandhi went to 2 Willingdon Crescent, the house occupied by the Mission, and on one occasion, by arrangement, he encountered Pethick-Lawrence on his evening walk and thus avoided the publicity that attended every one of Gandhi's acts.

After weeks of goings and comings with no definite result, the Cabinet Mission invited the Congress and the Moslem League to send four delegates each to a conference in Simla. Gandhi was not a delegate but he made himself available in the summer capital for consultation. At a subsequent stage Nehru and Jinnah wrestled with the issues privately. There was no agreement. The two Indian parties did not wish to accept the onus of devising a plan or of agreeing with one another.

Finally, Gandhi told the Cabinet Mission to suggest a plan to the Indian parties.

The Cabinet Mission's plan, published on May 16th, 1946, was Britain's proposal for the liquidation of British power in India. 'Whether you like the Cabinet delegation's announcement or not,' Gandhi told his prayer meeting that day, 'it is going to be the most momentous one in the history of India and therefore requires careful study.'

Gandhi pondered the announcement for four days and then stated that after 'searching examination . . . my con-

viction abides that it is the best document the British government could have produced in the circumstances.'

Rejecting a facile and popular Indian charge, Gandhi said in *Harijan* of May 26th, 1946, 'The Congress and the Moslem League did not, could not agree. We would err grievously if at this time we foolishly satisfy ourselves that the differences are a British creation.'

The British government's 'one purpose,' the Mahatma said, 'is to end British rule as early as can be.'

'Voluminous evidence,' the Cabinet mission's statement declared, 'has shown an almost universal desire, outside the supporters of the Moslem League, for the unity of India.'

Nevertheless, 'We were greatly impressed by the very genuine and acute anxiety of the Moslems lest they should find themselves subjected to a perpetual Hindu-majority rule. This has become so strong and widespread amongst the Moslems that it cannot be allayed by mere paper safeguards. If there is to be internal peace in India it must be secured by measures which will insure to the Moslems a control in all matters vital to their culture, religion and economic and other interests.'

The Mission therefore examined 'closely and impartially the possibility of a partition of India.'

What was the result?

On the basis of statistics given in the statement, the Cabinet Mission proved that in the north-western area of Pakistan the non-Moslem minority would constitute 37.93 per cent, and in the north-eastern area it would amount to 48.31 per cent, while twenty million Moslems would remain outside Pakistan as a minority in the other India. 'These figures show,' the statement said, 'that the setting up of a separate sovereign State of Pakistan on the lines claimed

by the Moslem League would not solve the communal minority problem.'

The Mission then considered whether a smaller Pakistan, which excluded non-Moslem areas, was feasible. 'Such a Pakistan,' the statement noted, 'is regarded by the Moslem League as quite impracticable.' It would have necessitated the division of the Punjab, Bengal and Assam between the two new states, whereas Jinnah demanded those three provinces in their entirety. 'We ourselves', the Ministers affirmed, 'are also convinced that any solution which involves a radical partition of the Punjab and Bengal, as this would do, would be contrary to the wishes of a very large percentage of the inhabitants of these Provinces. Bengal and the Punjab each has its own common language and a long history and tradition. Moreover, any division of the Punjab would of necessity divide the Sikhs, leaving substantial bodies of Sikhs on both sides of the boundary.'

The division of India, the Mission said, would weaken the country's defences and violently tear in two its communications and transport systems. 'Finally there is the geographical fact that the two halves of the proposed Pakistan State are separated by some seven hundred miles and the communications between them both in war and peace would be dependent on the goodwill of Hindustan . . . .

'We are therefore unable to advise the British government,' the statement announced, 'that the power which at present resides in British hands should be handed over to two entirely separate sovereign States.'

Instead, the British Ministers recommended a united India, embracing both British India and the native states, with one federal government to deal with foreign affairs, defence and communications. In the national legislature, a majority of those voting and a majority of the Hindus

as well as a majority of the Moslems voting would be required to decide any major communal or religious issue.

Newly elected provincial legislatures would elect the members of a national Constituent Assembly. It would draft India's constitution.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet mission announced, Lord Wavell would proceed with the formation of an interim or provisional government.

In a peroration, the Cabinet statement declared that the Indian people now had 'the opportunity of complete independence . . . in the shortest time and with the least danger of internal disturbance and conflict.'

That same day, May 16th, 1946, Cripps, Pethick-Lawrence and Wavell, speaking on the radio, explained and extolled the plan. Cripps called attention to the danger of nationwide famine and the need of preventing a breakdown of administrative machinery. 'Let no one doubt for one moment our intentions,' he begged. Pethick-Lawrence addressed his audience as 'a great people.' This term had political significance, for the Moslem leaders always spoke of 'peoples.' He pleaded with the Moslems to accept the plan; it gave them the advantages of a Pakistan without its disadvantages. Wavell spoke of the necessity of maintaining the union of India and closed with a verse from Longfellow:

> Thou too, sail on, O Ship of State,
> Sail on, O Union, strong and great,
> Humanity with all its fears,
> With all the hopes of future years
> Is hanging breathless on thy Fate.

Jinnah criticized the Cabinet Mission on May 21st. He insisted that Pakistan was the only solution and deplored

the 'commonplace and exploded arguments aimed at it by Pethick-Lawrence, Cripps and Alexander . . . . It seems,' he charged, 'that this was done by the Mission simply to appease and placate the Congress.' Jinnah said he would have preferred a Union with no Union legislature and an executive branch with an equal number of Moslems and Hindus. If there was to be a national legislature, it too should, he felt, consist of as many representatives from Pakistan as from Hindustan; and 'in regard to any matter of a controversial nature,' a three-fourths majority would be necessary in the executive and the legislature. All these ideas were ignored by the British ministers, he complained. Small wonder. They would have made government impossible.

On June 4th, nevertheless, the Moslem League accepted the Cabinet Mission's plan.

Everything depended on what the Congress party would do.

The Congress Working Committee withdrew to Mussoorie, a summer resort in the hills, to escape the debilitating heat and suffocating dust storms of Delhi, and took Gandhi with them.

India's eyes were on Mussoorie. The Working Committee deliberated with Gandhi. The meetings were more fateful than they knew.

Foreign correspondents followed Gandhi to Mussoorie. 'What would you do if you were dictator of India for a day?' one of them asked.

If the journalist had expected Gandhi's answer to contain some hint of the long-delayed Congress decision, he was disappointed. 'I would not accept it,' Gandhi replied, but if he did he would spend the day cleaning out the hovels of the Harijans in New Delhi and converting the

Viceroy's palace into a hospital. 'Why does the Viceroy need such a big house?' he exclaimed.

'Well, sir,' the journalist persisted, 'suppose they continue your dictatorship for a second day?'

'The second day,' Gandhi said with a laugh, 'would be a prolongation of the first.' This provoked general gaiety among the Indians present.

Still no word of the Congress response to the Cabinet Mission's proposal!

On June 8th, refreshed by the pine-scented breezes that blew down from the cool, wooded slopes, Gandhi returned in a car to New Delhi where the Congress deliberations would be continued. Rajagopalachari, no longer a member of the Working Committee (nor was Gandhi), had come from Madras to Delhi to urge acceptance of the British plan.

A week passed and still no word from Congress on whether it would accept or reject the Cabinet Mission's proposal.

On June 16th, Lord Wavell announced that Congress and the Moslem League had failed to agree on the composition of a provisional government and he was therefore appointing fourteen Indians to posts in that government.

Congress now had to answer two questions: to join or not to join the provisional government; to enter or not to enter the Constituent Assembly and draft a new constitution for a free united India.

CHAPTER XIV

GANDHI REVISITED

I ARRIVED at the New Delhi airport on June 25th, 1946, and drove to the Imperial Hotèl. I was tired from the flight from Cairo; I needed a bath and shave. But I had an uncontrollable impulse to see Gandhi immediately. My first act in India, I felt, should be to have a word with Gandhi. So instead of making sure I had a room in the hotel, I left my luggage in the lobby and took a taxi to Gandhi's little stone hut in the Harijan colony.

He was at his evening prayer meeting in an open space outside the hut. Approximately a thousand persons were at the services. Gandhi in loincloth, a moist white pad on his head, his feet on his thighs, sat in the centre of a large elevated wooden platform with several disciples. His eyes were closed. Occasionally he opened them and beat time with his hands to the singing. On the ground, in front of the platform, sat the women worshippers; behind them the men. The curious stood around on the periphery of the congregation. The Indian and foreign correspondents were there, also Mrdula Sarabhai, Nehru and Lady Cripps.

I posted myself at the foot of the three wooden steps where Gandhi would descend from the prayer platform. 'Ah, there you are,' he said; 'well, I have not grown better-looking in these four years.'

'I would not dare to differ with you,' I replied. He threw back his head and laughed. Taking me by the elbow, he walked towards his hut; he asked about my trip, my health and my family. Then, probably sensing that I would like to stay for a talk, he said, 'Lady Cripps is here to see me. Will you walk with me to-morrow morning?'

Later that evening I went to the house of Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress president, for dinner with him, Nehru, Mr. Asaf Ali and other members of the Congress Working

Committee. They seemed tense, and listened with special attention to the government news broadcast. Earlier that day, Congress had finally communicated its decisions to the Cabinet Mission and Wavell, but no public announcement had yet been made.

The Working Committee had decided, I learned, to accept the British plan for the future constitution of India but not to participate in the provisional government.

The next morning I was up early enough to sip a cup of luke-warm black tea and eat a banana and find a taxi which brought me to Gandhi's hut at 5-30. We walked for half an hour. He talked most of the time about the negotiations with the Cabinet Mission.

I lunched with Patel and Rajagopalachari in Birla House, talked for an hour in the same mansion with Miss Slade, and spent the evening with Patel.

The following day, June 27th, I went to Gandhi again at 5-30 a.m. and walked with him for thirty minutes. Sir Stafford and Lady Cripps received me at 9-30 for a friendly and helpful interview. I kept the taxi because I had an appointment with Jinnah for 10-30.

After going a short distance, the taxi coughed and coughed and stood still. The Sikh driver tinkered under the bonnet, but as the time of my meeting with Jinnah drew near I became increasingly alarmed and finally, after trying in vain to persuade the chauffeur of a government car to earn some extra money, hired a tonga. Hunger had apparently made the horse unresponsive to whips and oaths and I arrived at Jinnah's house thirty-five minutes late. I was admitted into his study after a short wait. I offered profuse apologies, explained that my taxi had broken down, that no other taxi was available, that the tonga was slow and that I loathed being unpunctual. He said frigidly, 'I trust you are not hurt.' I said it was not

that kind of breakdown; the mechanism had simply refused to function. He was sympathetic but formal and continued to talk about the incident.

When I could disentangle myself from the discussion of taxi and tonga I remarked, 'It seems India is about to become independent.'

He did not answer. He did not say anything. He pulled in his chin, looked sternly at me, stood up, extended his hand and said, 'I will have to go now.'

I once more apologized for keeping him waiting, I had not reckoned with the taxi difficulty and could I see him another day in New Delhi? No, he would be busy. He was going to Bombay and I would soon be in Bombay; could I see him there? No, he would be too busy. He had by this time brought me to the door. I shall never know whether he was offended by my being late or by my statement on the imminence of India's freedom.

Over the week-end, I absorbed as much as possible about the political situation. Patel's sharp mind was my best help. On Monday, July 1st, I flew to Bombay and on Tuesday evening I commenced a three-day sojourn at Dr. Dinshah Mehta's nature-cure clinic in Poona where Gandhi was staying. Part of the time, Nehru was there.

I travelled with Gandhi to Bombay on July 5th and spent the 6th and 7th at the sessions of the All-India Congress Committee which debated the Working Committee's decisions on the Cabinet Mission plan and listened to the Mahatma on the subject.

Later that month I toured Maharashtra with Jayaprakash Narayan, the Socialist leader, and arrived at Panchgani, in the rain-soaked hills, on July 16th, for a forty-eight-hour visit to Gandhi.

Gandhi did not seem to have aged since 1942; his stride was not as long and lusty, but walking did not tire him

nor did days of interviews. He was in almost constant good humour.

At the beginning of my first morning stroll with him in New Delhi he asked about the rumours of war with Russia. I said there was a good deal of talk about war but perhaps it was only talk. 'You should turn your attention to the West,' I added.

'I?' he replied. 'I have not convinced India. There is violence all around us. I am a spent bullet.'

Since the end of the second World War, I suggested, many Europeans and Americans were conscious of a spiritual emptiness. He might fill a corner of it. India needs material goods and perhaps had the illusion that they brought happiness. We had the material goods but knew they did not bring happiness. The West was groping for a solution.

'But I am an Asiatic,' he commented. 'A mere Asiatic.' He laughed; then after a pause, 'Jesus was an Asiatic.'

In this, and in subsequent conversations, I thought I detected a despondent note with an optimistic undertone: if he lived 125 years he would have enough time to finish his work.

It was 8-30 in the evening when I arrived at the stone building of the Poona nature-cure clinic. I was shown his room and walked in. He was sitting on a pallet; a white shawl enveloped him from neck to ankles. He did not look up. When he finished writing the postcard, he raised his head and said, 'Ah.' I knelt in front of him and we shook hands. He had a way, which none of his heirs has inherited, of figuratively putting his arms around you and making you feel welcome to his house and India.

'You have come by the *Deccan Queen*,' he remarked. 'On that train there is no food.'

I said I didn't mind, I had already been promised

dinner. 'The weather here seems wonderful,' I volunteered. 'You tortured yourself in the summer heat of Sevagram,' where I had seen him in 1942.

'No,' he objected, 'it wasn't torture. But in New Delhi I would melt ice in the bath and sit in it as you did in Sevagram. I was even unashamed to receive people in my bath and dictate in the bath. Here in Poona the weather is delightful.' He appeared very relaxed.

Presently, without any question from me, he spoke at length about violence. 'First,' he said, 'there is South Africa. A man has been killed there in connection with the recent disturbances. He was innocent. Also, they have tied Indians to trees and whipped them. This is lynch law. And now these riots in Ahmedabad between Hindus and Moslems. The trouble is that one side begins stabbing and killing and then the other does likewise. If one side did not avenge its deaths the thing would stop. It is the same in Palestine. The Jews have a good case. I told Sidney Silverman, the British M.P., that the Jews have a good case. If the Arabs have a claim to Palestine the Jews have a prior claim, because they were there first. Jesus was a Jew. He was the finest flower of Judaism. You can see that from the four stories of the four apostles. They had untutored minds. They told the truth about Jesus. Paul was not a Jew, he was a Greek, he had an oratorical mind, a dialectical mind and he distorted Jesus. Jesus possessed a great force, the love force, but Christianity became disfigured when it went to the West. It became the religion of kings.'

He reverted to the Jewish question in Hitler Germany. 'But I did not intend talking with you tonight,' he declared, 'and you have not eaten.'

I rose to go. 'Sleep well,' I said.

'I always sleep well. Today was my day of silence and

I slept four times. I fell asleep while I was on the rack.'

'During his massage,' a woman doctor interpreted.

'You must get massage here,' Gandhi urged.

After dinner, I passed Gandhi's bed on the open-air stone terrace. Two women disciples were massaging his feet and shins. His bed was a mattress-covered wooden plank with two bricks under it to raise the head higher than the feet. A mosquito net hung over the bed. Several young women were sitting on the mats near him and laughing. He called out to me, 'I hope you will be up in time to have breakfast with me.' He said first breakfast was at 4.

'I'd rather be excused from that one.'

'Then second breakfast at 5.'

I made a face and everybody laughed.

'You had better have third breakfast with me at 9,' he said. 'Get up at 6.'

I was up at 6-30. When I stepped out into the courtyard, Gandhi was chatting with an Indian. He greeted me and we started on his morning walk.

'You said last night,' I recalled, 'that Paul altered the teachings of Jesus. Will the people around you do the same ?'

'You are not the first to mention this possibility,' he replied. 'I see through them. Yes, I know they may try to do just that. I know India is not with me. I have not convinced enough Indians of the wisdom of non-violence.'

Again he talked at length about the persecution of coloured races in South Africa. He inquired about the treatment of Negroes in the United States. 'A civilization,' he said, 'is to be judged by its treatment of minorities.'

After a massage by a powerful Ceylonese who kneaded the muscles till they ached, I felt better and looked into Gandhi's room. It had no door, only a curtain which I

pushed aside. He noticed me and said, 'Come in, you are always welcome.' He was writing an article for *Harijan* and submitting to questions in the vernacular by three Indians. I went in and out until 11 a.m. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, a Christian princess who served him as first English-language secretary, was reading Reuters news bulletins to him. Now and then he muttered 'Hm.' The South African items made him shake his head sadly. 'President Truman', a flash radiogram stated, 'yesterday signed the Indian immigration and naturalization bill'. Gandhi asked about the provisions of the new law. How many Indians would be granted citizenship and how many could immigrate? Are Chinese and Japanese admitted into the United States?

'More than anyone else,' I said to Gandhi, 'the man who is responsible for the passage of the bill is the President of the India League of America, J. J. Singh. Would you write him a letter?' He promised and gave me the letter a few days later.

Gulbai, Dr. Mehta's wife, brought me a heaped bowl of peeled and sliced fruit and placed it on the mat. Gandhi had already had his third breakfast, so I ate while he talked. He said he was trying to create a classless and casteless India. He yearned for the day when there would be only one caste and Brahmans would marry Harijans. 'I am a social revolutionist,' he asserted. 'Violence is bred by inequality, non-violence by equality.' Gandhi's religion merged with his sociology.

I said I knew that the mounting prejudice against coloured peoples in South Africa disturbed him; he had fought it for twenty years. 'But I hope,' I added, 'you will do nothing violent in this connection. You are a violent man.' He laughed. 'Some of your fasts are violent,' I continued.

'You want me to confine myself to violent words,' he commented.

'Yes.'

'I do not know when I am going to fast,' he explained. 'It is God who determines that. It comes to me suddenly. But I will not act rashly. I have no desire to die.'

Sudhir Ghosh, a youthful Cambridge University graduate, came in to bid Gandhi goodbye. He was going to England and the Mahatma was giving him a letter of introduction to Prime Minister Attlee. Gandhi's go-between with the Cabinet Mission, Ghosh had so distinguished himself by his intelligent and gracious handling of delicate diplomatic tasks that Gandhi was asking him to be his liaison with Attlee, Cripps, Pethick-Lawrence and others in London. Like many a head of state, Gandhi wished to be his own 'foreign minister'. Usually, the official foreign minister resents the intrusion.

That afternoon, before the prayer meeting, an Indian in his twenties approached me and said he was the editor of a Hindu Mahasabha weekly published in Poona and would I give him a message. I said I did not approve of the Hindu Mahasabha any more than I approved of the Moslem League; both stood for religion in politics. 'The Hindu Mahasabha,' I declared with some acerbity, 'stands for Hindu supremacy. Do you like white supremacy?' We parted.

Hundreds of Poona citizens stood in a field on the other side of the clinic's low fence while Gandhi and his friends conducted the services on a wooden platform on this side of the fence. During the singing it commenced to rain; worshippers put up their black umbrellas. A murmur of protest arose from those in the rear and all umbrellas were lowered. Somebody held one over Gandhi. A few

hundred yards away two Indian teams in white flannels were playing cricket.

Before dinner, Gandhi invited me to walk with him. 'Surely you are not going to walk in the rain,' I protested lightly.

'Come along, old man,' he said and stretched out his arm.

I had been given a private room that opened on the terrace where Gandhi slept. Late in the evening, when I was about to retire, I passed Gandhi's bed. I greeted him silently with a raised hand but he called out, 'You must sleep well tonight. But we will disturb you with our prayer at 4.'

'I hope not,' I said and approached him.

He addressed himself to Mrs. Mehta in Hindustani or Gujarati, and I thought he was scolding her. 'We are talking about you and you are curious,' Gandhi remarked.

'Somehow I knew it,' I replied. 'Now you have made it worse by telling me but not disclosing what you were talking about. I should offer Satyagraha against you until you tell me.'

'All right,' he laughed.

'I will sit by your bed all night.'

'Come along,' he said with a lilt.

'I will sit here and sing American songs.'

'All right, you will sing me to sleep.'

Everybody was enjoying the fun.

Gandhi's laughter was physical and mental; it was amusement plus agreement or at least amusement plus tolerance. It was the laughter of a man who is not afraid to be caught with his visor up and his guard down.

It had grown late and I wished them good night. I talked to Mrs. Mehta. Gandhi had scolded her because she served my breakfast in his room at 11 instead of 9 and this had held up the noonday meal of the others and besides

she had given me special food; no one should receive privileged treatment.

I awoke very fit and went to Gandhi's room. He invited me to walk. I requested his views on the next step in the Indian political situation. 'The British,' he answered with alacrity, 'must ask Congress to form a coalition government. All the minorities will co-operate.'

'Would you include members of the Moslem League?'

'Of course', he replied. 'Mr. Jinnah can have a highly important post.'

He left me for a while to talk to a young Indian woman. I had noticed him walking up and down the terrace with her the day before in agitated conversation. Then she had gone away and a young man stepped to Gandhi's side and they talked together for about a quarter of an hour. Pyarelal told me who they were. She was an untouchable and limped from an accident. The young man, likewise a Harijan, was her husband and he had had a forearm amputated. They were having marital difficulties and Gandhi wanted to patch up their relations.

When we resumed our constitutional, he began a discussion of Europe and Russia. I said Moscow had nothing to give the world; it had gone nationalistic, imperialistic and Pan-Slav. This could not feed the West. The democracies were beginning to realize that world peace would only come with internationalism and spiritual regeneration.

'Why do you want me to go to the West?'

'Not go to the West, but speak to the West.'

'Why does the West need me to tell them that two times two are four? If they realize that the way of violence and war is evil why am I necessary to point out the obvious truth? Besides, I have unfinished work here.'

'Nevertheless,' I said, 'the West needs you. You are the antithesis to materialism and therefore the antidote to

Stalinism and statism.' He talked about the increase of the spirit of violence in India since 1942.

Pedestrians gathered to watch Gandhi as we moved to and fro on the path that led to the city There were factories near by and occasionally their whistles blew, but he never stopped talking; nor did he lift his voice; he talked through the noise.

I asked whether he had read my book *A Week with Gandhi.* He had, and apart from a few minor errors (I mis-stated Kasturbai's age, for instance) he thought well of it. He had also read my *Men and Politics;* he read it in his 'library', as he called the lavatory where he kept a shelf of books.

Nehru arrived at the clinic with Krishna Menon who later became Indian High Commissioner in London. 'Nehru,' Gandhi said to me, 'has an oratorical mind.' Menon, Nehru, I and several others lunched together in the large common dining-room. I was served mutton chops. By request, I shared my portion with Nehru.

Gandhi knew that Nehru ate meat and smoked; he did not object. But Nehru never smoked in Gandhi's presence. (Only Maulana Abul Kalam Azad did, and Gandhi always reminded the girls in advance to bring in an ashtray.) Nehru has infinite charm, grace, tenderness and talent to express himself in words. Gandhi called him an artist. His years at Harrow and Cambridge made him very British and other years in prison made him very bitter. During his long imprisonment between 1942 and 1945 he had grown completely grey and completely bald but no less handsome. In his private life and public life he has suffered much. His smile, which reveals two rows of fine white teeth, melts the heart alike by its cheer and its unintended sadness.

Gandhi loved Nehru as a son and Nehru loved Gandhi as

a father. Nehru never hid the deep difference between his outlook and Gandhi's. He spoke and wrote about it frequently. Gandhi welcomed the frankness. Their affection for one another did not depend on agreement.

Something far down in Nehru's psyche rebels against surrender. He was repelled by the unquestioning obedience which most Indian leaders gave Gandhi. He questioned and argued and resisted—and finally surrendered. He fights for the independence of his personality. He balks against conquest. When he submits he does so with meekness and grace. Gandhi knew his frailties and he himself has come to recognize his limitations. In politics all his life, Nehru never mastered the intricacies of party politics as the Mahatma and Patel did. He is the tribune not the organizer, a spokesman to the outside, not the manipulator inside. He appeals most to intellectuals but not with intellect; his appeal is to the heart. In India, that is an asset. He is an aristocrat whose love for aristocrats is no impediment to his love of the people. One of the world's foremost statesmen, he is not a statesman at all. He is a good person lost among statesmen. The people give him adulation; he lends it to those who run the machine of government.

In India Nehru is addicted to gusts of temper and bursts of indignation. On occasions, he bodily assaulted men who aroused his indignation. He has endless physical courage. Sometimes, in press conferences, he makes unconsidered statements of defiance. These may all be strivings towards strength. There can be no doubt that it was Gandhi's vast inner strength and clarity, among other things, that so fascinated and captivated Jawaharlal.

Nehru's books show beauty of soul, nobility of ideal and egocentrism. Gandhi seemed entirely extrovert; he was no

burden to himself. Nehru must always cope with his own problem.

In the afternoon of that second day at the nature-cure clinic, Nehru sat cross-legged on my bed for an hour while I occupied the only chair. He had gone to his beloved native Kashmir on a visit; the Maharaja forbade his entry. He grappled with an Indian soldier, equipped with bayoneted rifle, who barred his way at the frontier post. Now he said, 'I am convinced that the British Agent would not have kept me out of Kashmir while I was engaged in the Cabinet Mission negotiations without first consulting the Viceroy, and, that being so, it does not appear that they are getting ready to leave India.'

Krishna Menon shared this scepticism.

I asked Nehru whether he considered himself a Socialist. 'I am a Socialist but not a Marxist,' he replied. 'I am a Socialist but I don't believe in any dogma.' (In 1948, in New Delhi, he told me that as he grew older he judged people 'more by their personal character than their isms' and that he had moved 'closer to Christ and Buddha, especially Buddha', and further, therefore, from Marx, Lenin and Stalin and closer to Gandhi.)

Nehru spent several hours of the afternoon alone with Gandhi; nobody disturbed them. Late in the afternoon, I went to Gandhi's room and found him spinning. I said I thought he had abandoned spinning. 'No, how could I?' he asked. 'There are four hundred million Indians. Subtract one hundred million children, waifs and others; if the remaining three hundred million would spin an hour each day we would have Swaraj.'

'Because of the economic or spiritual effect?' I asked.

'Both,' he said. 'If three hundred million people did the same thing once a day not because a Hitler ordered it but because they were inspired by the same ideal we would have

enough unity of purpose to achieve independence.'

'When you stop spinning to talk to me you are delaying Swaraj.'

'Yes,' he agreed, 'you have postponed Swaraj by six yards.'

Prime Minister Kher of Bombay province and Morarji Desai, the Home Member of the province, visited Gandhi to report on the continuing Ahmedabad intercommunity riots. At nine in the evening I accompanied Nehru and Menon to Desai's residence in Poona. Desai blamed Moslems for the disturbances. Shortly before midnight, Nehru and Menon took the train to Bombay.

The next morning Gandhi and about ten companions and I walked to the Poona station and boarded the express to Bombay. The party had the use of a special third-class carriage with a hard wooden bench down the length of each outer wall and another down the centre of the carriage. It rained heavily throughout the journey, and soon water began to pour from the roof and through openings in the window frames and door. Large puddles formed on the floor. At a number of stops en route, local Congress leaders boarded the train for conferences with Gandhi. Between times, he wrote a brief article for *Harijan* and corrected another article. He looked up at me once and smiled and we exchanged a few remarks. When his editorial work was finished he stretched out on the wooden bench and in a moment he was sleeping serenely. He slept for about fifteen minutes.

Gandhi occupied a place near a window. At all stations immense crowds gathered despite the downpour. At one stop, two boys, about fourteen years of age, wet to their brown skins, their hair dripping, jumped up and down outside Gandhi's window, moved their bent arms up and down

and yelled, 'Gandhiji, Gandhiji, Gandhiji.' He smiled.

I said, 'What are you to them?'

He put his fists with thumbs upward to his temples and replied, 'A man with horns, a spectacle.'

Gandhi left the train at a suburban station to avoid the crowd at the Bombay terminus. He and the other Congress leaders were congregating in Bombay for a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee (A.I.C.C.) which would debate the Working Committee decisions to accept the Cabinet Mission's long-term plan for a constitution but to refuse participation in the interim government.

The two-day session took place in a hall built like a theatre. The floor of the stage was covered with white cotton homespun. Leaders clothed in somewhat finer white homespun sat on the floor of the stage and leaned on large bolsters placed against the scenery. To the left and rear of the centre of the stage was a big divan covered with white homespun. It was unoccupied. Nehru, in clinging white cotton trousers, a white blouse reaching half way down his thighs and an apricot-coloured sleeveless vest, presided. He used a microphone erected near his chair. Two hundred and fifty-five voting delegates sat in the hall together with hundreds of visitors and several score Indian and foreign journalists.

Access to the stage from the well of the theatre was by a short flight of wooden steps. A speaker would mount to the top step, leave his or her sandals there and walk barefoot to the microphone.

During the deliberations, a woman came to the stage from behind the scenes and put a flat box on the divan. Shortly after, Gandhi walked on, sat down on the divan, opened the box and started spinning. His entrance was applauded briefly by the standing delegates. He acknowledged their welcome with a smile. It is considered undignified to

make too much noise with handclapping or exclamations.

The second day, Sunday, July 7th, Gandhi, in loincloth, addressed the Committee from a sitting position on the white divan. He spoke Hindustani into a microphone but the mechanism was defective and he was barely audible.

The speech, delivered extemporaneously, was published verbatim in *Harijan* and all Indian dailies. It consisted of about 1700 words and he pronounced them slowly, in approximately fifteen minutes, as though he were talking to one person in his hut.

He said:

'I have been told that some of my previous remarks about the Cabinet Mission's proposals have caused a good deal of confusion in the public mind. As a Satyagrahi it is always my endeavour to speak the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I never have a wish to hide anything from you. I hate mental reservations. But language is at best an imperfect medium of expression. No man can express fully in words what he feels or thinks. Even seers and prophets of old have suffered under that disability....

'I did say in one of my speeches at Delhi in regard to the Cabinet Mission's proposals that I saw darkness where I saw light before. That darkness has not yet lifted. If possible it has deepened. I could have asked the Working Committee to turn down the proposal about the Constituent Assembly if I could see my way clearly. You know my relations with the members of the Working Committee. Babu Rajendra Prasad might have been a High Court Judge, but he chose instead to act as my interpreter and clerk in Champaran. Then there is the Sardar [Patel]. He has earned the nickname of being my Yes-man. He does not mind it. He even flaunts it as a compliment. He is a stormy petrel. Once he used to dress and dine in the Western style. But ever since he decided to cast his lot with me my word has

been law to him. But even he cannot see eye to eye with me in this matter. They both tell me that whereas on all previous occasions I was able to support my instinct with reason and satisfy their head as well as heart, this time I have failed to do so. I told them in reply that whilst my own heart was filled with misgivings I could not adduce any reason for it or else I would have asked them to reject the proposals straightaway. It was my duty to place my misgivings before them to put them on their guard. But they should examine what I had said in the light of reason and accept my point of view only if they were convinced of its correctness.'

They were not convinced of its correctness and therefore the Working Committee took a middle course by approving the provisions for the future constitution of India but holding aloof from the interim government. The Socialist fraction of the A.I.C.C., and some others, were fighting the Working Committee's compromise. They advocated abstention from the Constituent Assembly as well as from the interim government. They wished to follow Gandhi's instinct even though he had not supported it with rational argument.

'...I am surprised that Jayaprakash Narayan said yesterday' Gandhi continued, 'that it would be dangerous to participate in the proposed Constituent Assembly and therefore you should reject the Working Committee's resolution. I was not prepared to hear such defeatist language from the lips of a tried fighter like Jayaprakash . . . A Satyagrahi knows no defeat.

'Nor would I expect a Satyagrahi to say that whatever Englishmen do is bad. The English are not necessarily bad. There are good men and bad men among the English people as among any other people. We ourselves are not free from defects. The English could not have risen to

their present strength if they had not some good in them. They have come and exploited India because we quarrelled amongst ourselves and allowed ourselves to be exploited. In God's world unmixed evil never prospers. God rules even where Satan holds sway because the latter exists only on His sufferance.' Then he talked about non-violence and the 1942 civil disobedience movement.

'We must have patience and humility and detachment ... The Constituent Assembly is going to be no bed of roses but only a bed of thorns. You may not shirk it....

'Let us not be cowardly, but approach our task with confidence and courage ... Never mind the darkness that fills my mind. He will turn it into light.'

Everybody handclapped two or three times.

The vote was 204 in favour of the Working Committee's compromise and 51 against. The negative poll was considered large; it reflected the doubts present in Gandhi's, Nehru's, in fact most members' minds about British intentions. After more than a hundred and fifty years of British tutelage and eighty-nine years of the British Empire, no Indian could completely divest himself of distrust.

I spent a number of days in the hot, dank Bombay of the monsoon summer and then left with Jayaprakash Narayan and his wife Prabhavati to tour the Maharashtra en route to Gandhi's new residence in Panchgani. We travelled to Poona by train and thence by car.

The ancient car broke down several miles outside the town and we proceeded by a commercial passenger bus. Arrangements had been made for Socialist delegations to greet Jayaprakash along the road. Wherever they appeared—six times during the journey—the bus stopped, Jayaprakash, Prabhavati and I stepped out, the local folks made little speeches, each of us received a garland of most fragrant blooms placed around the neck and a tightly pack-

ed bouquet or an armful of bananas to carry. In several places, after we had returned to the bus, a woman came in and touched our knuckles with a tiny metal hand covered with a colourless, perfumed cream. We rode in a cloud of scent. Throughout the repeated ceremonies, the passengers in the bus and the driver waited patiently without demur.

Jayaprakash stayed over to address an evening meeting in Satara while Prabhavati and I, in a borrowed car, drove over the hills and through the mists to Panchgani. We arrived near midnight; the town was dark and dead. Stray pedestrians could not tell us where Gandhi was stopping. We were compelled to get out of the car at every stone summer villa, walk up the steps to the porch and see whether anybody was sleeping there. On one porch, we saw Gandhi lying among his disciples.

In the morning Prabhavati put her head on Gandhi's feet and he patted her with sweet affection. About lunch-time, Jayaprakash arrived. He and I were the only visitors so I had ample opportunity for conversation with Gandhi.

He began by asking me what I had learned. I had noticed a sharp cleavage between those who believed in the Constituent Assembly and those who did not.

Gandhi: 'I do not consider the Constituent Assembly non-revolutionary. I am convinced that it is a perfect substitute for civil disobedience.'

L. F.: 'You think the British are playing the game?'

Gandhi: 'I think the British will play the game this time.'

L. F.: 'You believe they are withdrawing from India?'

Gandhi: 'Yes.'

L. F.: 'I believe it, too, but I cannot convince Jayaprakash. But supposing the British do not leave, you will offer your kind of protest, not Jayaprakash's?'

Gandhi: 'No, Jayaprakash will have to join me. I will

not pit myself against him. In 1942, I said I was sailing out on uncharted waters. I will not do it now. I did not know the people then. I know now what I can do and what I cannot.'

L. F.: 'You did not know in 1942 that there would be violence?'

Gandhi: 'Correct'.

L. F.: 'So if the Constituent Assembly fails you will not stage a civil disobedience campaign?'

Gandhi: 'Not unless the Socialists and the Communists are subdued by that time.'

L. F.: 'That is not likely. . . .'

Gandhi: 'I cannot think of civil disobedience when there is so much violence in the air in India. Today some Caste Hindus are not playing the game by the untouchables.'

L. F.: 'By some Caste Hindus you mean some Congressmen?'

Gandhi: 'Not many Congressmen. But there are some who have not banished untouchability from their hearts. That is the tragedy . . . The Moslems also feel they are wronged. In an orthodox Hindu house a Moslem will not be permitted to sit on the same carpet with a Hindu and have his meal. That is false religion. India is falsely religious. It must get true religion.'

L. F.: 'You have not succeeded with Congress?'

Gandhi: 'No, I have not. I have failed. Something, however, has been accomplished. The Harijans are admitted to the temples in Madura and in many other holy places, and the Caste Hindus worship in the same temples.'

That was the end of our morning talk. Gandhi was 'turning the searchlight inward' and instead of finding fault with others the beam helped him to find the faults of Congress and the Hindus. Some Hindus did not like

it. They preferred to blame Jinnah and England.

In the early afternoon, Jayaprakash had an hour with Gandhi. One of the secretaries translated to me part of her notes.

Jayaprakash: 'Congress is not organizing the strength of the country. Merit does not count in Congress today. Caste and family relationships count. This is the main reason we Socialists will not go into the Constituent Assembly. We felt that the Working Committee was overcome by a kind of helplessness. "If we do not accept the British proposal what can we do?" they were saying. This is an attitude of weakness. They expect the British to devise ways and means of bringing about an agreement between Congress and the Moslem League. We should have said to the British, "You go. We will settle this ourselves!" If the British do not like it they can put us in jail.'

Gandhi: 'Jail is jail for thieves and bandits. For me it is a palace. I was the originator of jail-going even before I read Thoreau. Tolstoy wrote that I had discovered something new, he wrote it in a Russian daily paper. A Russian woman translated it for me. I have fought the government from inside jails. Jail-going can bring Swaraj if the philosophy behind it is correct . . . But today jail-going would be a farce.'

Jayaprakash: 'Today we should send Englishmen to jail.'

Gandhi: 'Why? How? There is no need of it. This is a mere figure of speech and should not come from lips like yours. Even after violent warfare it would not be necessary. This is how Churchill talked of what he would do to Hitler. And witness the folly and the wickedness of the trial of the Nazi war criminals. Some of those who try the criminals are just as criminal.'

Congress had formed the governments of a number of

provinces, and Jayaprakash and Gandhi saw mounting corruption and nepotism there. The Socialists, moreover, together with many non-Socialist Congressmen, would have gloried in one last struggle to oust the British. They believed freedom is not real unless you forcibly expel your master. They suspected that the British would, with Moslem League connivance, seek to maintain a foot-hold in India. Jayaprakash therefore was in an anti-constitutional, anti-legal mood, a militant mood, whereas Gandhi, disillusioned by the Socialist and other violence in 1942, 1943 and 1944, was less militant than ever before in his career. That made his 'misgivings' about the Cabinet Mission's plan all the more painful. Widespread violence had knocked from his hand the special weapon he had forged: civil disobedience. The Constituent Assembly, consequently, was his only alternative.

Gandhi had entered on the road of anguish that led to his death.

Gandhi gave me more than an hour in the afternoon. He reverted to the Negro question in America. After a while, I said, 'Since my arrival in India, I have met some intelligent people. . . .'

Gandhi: 'Ah, have you? Not many.'

L. F.: 'You and two or three others.' He laughed. 'And some say Hindu-Moslem relations are better and some say they are worse.'

Gandhi: 'Jinnah and other Moslem leaders were once members of Congress. They left it because they felt the pinch of Hindu patronizing. In the beginning, the leading Congressmen were theosophists. Mrs. Annie Besant attracted me very much. Theosophy is the teaching of Madame Blavatsky. It is Hinduism at its best. Theosophy is the brotherhood of man. They took me to Mrs. Besant's [in London]. I was just a student from Bombay. I could

not understand the British accent. It was an ordeal for me. I felt quite unworthy of going to Mrs. Besant. Cultivated Moslems joined the theosophists. Later, Congress membership grew and with it the Hindu patronizing attitude. The Moslems are religious fanatics, but fanaticism cannot be answered with fanaticism. Bad manners irritate. Brilliant Moslems in Congress became disgusted. They did not find the brotherhood of man among the Hindus. They say Islam is the brotherhood of man. As a matter of fact, it is the brotherhood of Moslems. Theosophy is the brotherhood of man. Hindu separatism has played a part in creating the rift between Congress and the League. Jinnah is an evil genius. He believes he is a prophet.'

L. F.: 'He is a lawyer.'

Gandhi: 'You do him an injustice. I give you the testimony of my eighteen days of talks with him in 1944. He really looks upon himself as the saviour of Islam.'

L. F.: 'The Moslems are rich in temperament and spirit. They are warm and friendly.'

Gandhi: 'Yes.'

L. F.: 'But Jinnah is cold. He is a thin man. He pleads a case, he does not preach a cause.'

Gandhi: 'I agree he is a thin man. But I don't consider him a fraud. He has cast a spell over the Moslem, who is a simple-minded man.'

L. F.: 'Sometimes I think the Moslem-Hindu question is the problem of finding a place for the new Moslem middle class in an underdeveloped India. India is even too underdeveloped to offer a place to the poor. Jinnah won over the middle class because he helped it to compete with the older entrenched Hindu middle class. Now he is bridging the chasm between the landlord and peasant. He has done it with Pakistan.'

'And why are you happy?'

'We are happy because we are near Bapu,' she said.

Jayaprakash and I were leaving that day for Bombay; Prabhavati was staying with Gandhi. She had worked with Gandhi for many years. The women in the Mahatma's entourage—Miss Slade, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Sushila Nayyar, Prabhavati Narayan and others—loved Gandhi and he loved them. It was a father-daughter relationship of more than usual warmth and interdependence. Miss Slade became physically ill on a number of occasions when she was separated from Bapu or when she was worried about his health. Her bond with him was one of the remarkable platonic associations of our age. He often said to her, 'When this body is no more there will not be separation, but I shall be nearer to you. The body is a hindrance.'

Rajkumari and Miss Slade would kiss his hand; he would stroke their cheeks. He said that he deliberately surrounded himself with women to prove that his mastery over 'lust' was not achieved by avoiding women. But after his 'lust dream' in 1936 he took a six weeks' silence and did not put his hand on women's shoulders. He told his women secretaries about that dream before he wrote of it in *Harijan*. He shared his innermost thoughts with them.

Some of the female disciples were jealous when Gandhi appeared to favour one above the other. He was aware of it and tried to be impartial. He enjoyed their company and devotion. Whether they did not marry because of attachment to him or whether they were attached to him because they would not marry it is folly to guess. One was married but remained continent. They were all valiant Amazons of his causes.

Tagore, who loved Gandhi, wrote of the Mahatma, 'He

condemns sexual life as inconsistent with the moral progress of man and has a horror of sex as great as that of the author of *The Kreutzer Sonata,* but, unlike Tolstoy, he betrays no abhorrence of the sex that tempts his kind. In fact, his tenderness for woman is one of the noblest and most consistent traits of his character and he counts among the women of his country some of his best and truest comrades in the great movement he is leading.'

On July 18th, I had my last talk with the Mahatma. 'If the Working Committee had responded to your "groping in the dark", or your instinct, as you also called it, they would have rejected the Cabinet Mission's plan for the Constituent Assembly?' I began.

Gandhi: 'Yes, but I did not let them.'

L. F.: 'You mean you did not insist.'

Gandhi: 'More than that. I prevented them from following my instinct unless they felt likewise. It is no use conjecturing what would have happened. The fact is, however, that Dr. Rajendra Prasad asked me, "Does your instinct go so far that you would prevent us from accepting the long-term proposals whether we understand you or not?" I said, "No, follow your reason since my own reason does not support my instinct. My instinct rebels against my reason. I have placed my misgivings before you because I want to be faithful to you. I myself have not followed my instinct unless my reason backed it." '

L. F.: 'But you told me that you follow your instinct when it speaks to you on occasions, as, for instance, before certain fasts.'

Gandhi: 'Yes, but even in these cases my reason was there before the fast began....'

L. F.: 'Then why do you inject your instinct into the present political situation?'

Gandhi: 'I did not. But I was loyal. I wanted to retain my faith in the bona fides of the Cabinet Mission. So I told the Cabinet Mission that my instinct had misgivings. "Supposing," I said to myself, "they meant ill; they would be ashamed. They will say, 'He says his instinct tells him this, but we know the reason.' Their guilty conscience would prick them."'

L. F.: 'It did not. Does that mean the Cabinet Mission's intentions were honest?'

Gandhi: 'I do not retract anything from the original certificate I gave them....'

L. F.: 'You are strongly constitutionalist now because you fear violence?'

Gandhi: 'I say we must go into the Assembly and work it. If the British are dishonest they will be found out. The loss will not be ours but theirs and humanity's.'

L. F.: 'I think you are afraid of the spirit of the Indian National Army and Subhas Chandra Bose [its hero who went to Germany and Japan during the second World War]. It is widespread. He has captured the imagination of the youth and you are aware of it and you fear that mood. The young generation is indocentric.'

Gandhi: 'He has not captured the imagination of the country. It is too wide a term, but a section of the youth and of the women follow him... The Almighty has reserved mildness for India. "The mild Hindu" is used as a term of reproach. But I take it as a term of honour, just like Churchill's "Naked Fakir". I appropriated it as a compliment and even wrote about it to Churchill. I told Churchill I would love to be a naked fakir but was not one as yet.'

L. F.: 'Did he answer?'

Gandhi: 'Yes, he acknowledged my letter through the Viceroy in a courteous manner. But to resume... The unsophisticated women, untouched and unspoiled by civilization, so-called, are with me.'

L. F.: 'But you admire Bose. You believe he is alive. [He had been reported killed in an aeroplane accident.]

Gandhi: 'I do not encourage the Bose legend. I did not agree with him. I do not now believe he is alive. Instinct made me believe to the contrary at one time, because he had made himself into a legendary Robin Hood.'

L. F.: 'My point is this: Bose went to Germany and Japan, both fascist countries. If he was pro-fascist you can have no sympathy with him. If he was a patriot and believed that India would be saved by Germany or Japan, especially in 1944, he was stupid and statesmen cannot afford to be stupid.'

Gandhi: 'You have a high opinion of statesmen. Most of them are stupid... I have to work against heavy odds ... There is an active mood of violence that has to be combated and I am doing it in my own way. It is my implicit faith that it is a survival which will kill itself in time... It cannot live. It is so contrary to the spirit of India. But what is the use of talking? I believe in an inscrutable Providence that presides over our destinies—call it God or by any name you like.'

CHAPTER XV

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

CONGRESS would not participate in the provisional government because Lord Wavell had, on Jinnah's insistence, refused to allow it to nominate a Moslem for one of the government posts. True, Wavell had stipulated publicly that the composition of the interim government would not constitute a precedent. Congress feared it would, and refused adamantly to recognize Jinnah's right to veto a Congress Moslem's appointment to the Cabinet.

Wavell accordingly again asked Congress and the League to submit lists of its candidates for positions in the Government, but, in deference to Congress, stressed that no side could bar the nominees of the other. Jinnah thereupon declined the invitation to participate in the provisional government. On August 12th, 1946, Wavell commissioned Nehru to form the government. Nehru went to see Jinnah and offered him a choice of places in the Government for the Moslem League. Jinnah refused. Nehru then organized a government consisting of six Congressmen, of whom five were caste Hindus and one a Harijan, and, in addition, one Christian, one Sikh, one Parsi and two Moslems who were not of the Moslem League. Wavell announced that it was open to the Moslem League to name five of its members to the provisional government. Jinnah was not interested.

The Moslem League declared August 16th 'Direct Action Day'. Savage riots lasting four days broke out in Calcutta. 'Official estimates', writes Lord Pethick-Lawrence, 'placed the casualties at some five thousand killed and fifteen thousand wounded, and unofficial figures were higher still.'

Sir Shafaat Ahmed Khan, a Moslem who had resigned from the Moslem League to join Nehru's interim government, was waylaid in a lonely spot in Simla at dusk on August 24th and stabbed seven times. 'Obviously politi-

cal', high British authorities said of the assault.

On September 2nd, Nehru became Prime Minister of India. 'Our representatives and leaders have broken into the citadel of power,' J. B Kripalani, the new president of Congress, declared.

Gandhi was living in the untouchables' quarter in New Delhi on September 2nd. He woke very early that morning and wrote a letter to Nehru on the duties of the new Government. This was a red-letter day in India's history, he told his evening prayer meeting and he felt grateful to the British but in no mood for jubilation. 'Sooner, rather than later, complete power will be in your hands,' he promised the audience, 'if Pandit Nehru, your uncrowned king and Prime Minister, and his colleagues, did their part.' The Moslems were the brothers of the Hindus even if they were not in the Government as yet, Gandhi continued, and a brother does not return anger with anger.

But Jinnah proclaimed September 2nd a day of mourning and instructed Moslems to display black flags. The next day in Bombay, Jinnah said: 'The Russians may have more than a spectator's interest in Indian affairs, and they are not very far from India either.'

Sir Firoz Khan Noon, a big Punjab landowner and a Moslem League leader, had spoken in the same vein. 'If our own course is to fight,' he asserted, 'and if in that fight we go down, the only course for the Moslems is to look to Russia.'

Gandhi did not misread these signs. 'We are not yet in the midst of civil war,' he stated on September 9th, 'but we are nearing it.' Shootings and stabbings occurred in Bombay throughout September. A Moslem black flag was like a red flag to a Hindu. Trouble spread to the Punjab. Violence shook Bengal and Bihar.

The Moslem League announced that it would abstain from the national Constituent Assembly.

Alarmed by the disturbed state of the nation, Wavell redoubled his efforts to win Moslem League adherence to the new Government. Jinnah finally agreed, and appointed four Moslem League members and one untouchable who was an opponent of Gandhi. The Moslem League always proclaimed itself a religious body representing the Moslems of India. Why then should it have appointed an untouchable, a Hindu? Obviously to annoy Congress and the caste Hindus. It was a bad augury for the new Government. And, in fact, Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, Finance Member and foremost League spokesman in the Government, announced that he and his colleagues did not recognize the Government as a coalition and felt no obligation to co-operate with Nehru and the other Congress ministers. The Government was a house divided—by religion.

Every day Gandhi preached against the uninterrupted violence between the two communities. 'Some people even rejoice,' he said, 'that Hindus are now strong enough to kill in return those who tried to kill them. I would far rather that Hindus died without retaliation....'

At the same time he remembered his other causes and stressed the need for more khadi production; he protested against maltreatment of Harijans: 'If there is an epidemic they are beaten and cannot draw water from the wells. They live in hovels.' He wanted the Salt Tax completely annulled, but he asked the people to be patient in this regard; the new ministers were overwhelmed with unaccustomed tasks.

Most Congress ministers and many of their assistants as well as provincial officials came to Gandhi's hut in the Harijan quarter for frequent visits—sometimes daily—to

ask his advice and approval. Gandhi was 'super-Prime Minister'.

He wrote on leprosy and the need of collective prayer, on the regime in Indian jails and discrimination in South Africa, on lagging food production and the gods in the Hindu pantheon. Each day he gave instructions for his meals the next day. Whenever possible, he made diary entries. 'It seems to be so very hard', he wrote one night, 'to maintain detachment of mind in the midst of raging fire.' And he told a friend 'Why could I not suffer this anguish with unruffled calmness of spirit? I am afraid I have not the detachment required for living to 125 years.'

The raging fire of Hindu-Moslem strife gave him no rest. Yet his faith in human beings persisted. 'In Bombay a Hindu gave shelter to a Moslem friend the other day,' he wrote on October 15th. 'This infuriated a Hindu mob who demanded the head of the Moslem friend. The Hindu would not surrender his friend. So both went down literally in deadly embrace. This was how it was described to me authentically. Nor is this the first instance of chivalry in the midst of frenzy. During the recent blood bath in Calcutta, stories of Moslems having, at the peril of their lives, sheltered their Hindu friends and vice versa were recorded. Mankind would die if there were no exhibition any time and anywhere of the divine in man.'

Gandhi now went in search of the divine in maddened man.

Widespread Moslem attacks on Hindus had taken place during October in the distant Noakhali and Tippera rural areas of east Bengal. These seemed to alarm the Mahatma more than urban disturbances. Hitherto, inter-religious amity had prevailed in India's villages. If now community hatred invaded the country-side it might doom the nation to destruction. Gandhi decided to go to the scene of the

trouble. Unless he could stem the violence life would have no attraction for him. Friends tried to dissuade him. His health was poor. The Congress members of the Government wanted him near by. 'All I know is that I won't be at peace with myself unless I go there,' he replied. He wondered whether he would accomplish anything. But he had to try. He told people not to come to the station to see him off and get his blessing. He was in no mood for it.

They came in hordes. The Government gave him a special train (the British had done likewise) because when he went by the regular express the crowds that wanted to catch a glimpse of him delayed the train for hours and disrupted all traffic schedules. At the big cities where the special stopped, vast multitudes beleaguered the stations and swarmed over the tracks. They mounted the roof of the station, broke glass windows and wooden shutters, and created an ear-splitting din. Several times the conductor gave the signal for departure but someone pulled the emergency cord and the train stopped with a jerk. At one station the railway authorities turned the fire hose on the people but the water flooded Gandhi's compartment. He arrived in Calcutta five hours late, tired from the noise and commotion, and sad.

The day he left New Delhi, thirty-two persons were killed in another inter-religious riot in Calcutta; military reinforcements rushed to the scene. Police and troops were kept busy night and day dispersing bands of hooligans who attacked one another with kerosene bombs, bricks and soda-water bottles. The day after his arrival in Calcutta, Gandhi paid a brief courtesy call on Sir Frederick Burrows, the British governor, and a longer visit to Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy, the Moslem prime minister of Bengal province. The next day, October 31st, he again saw Suhrawardy and together they drove through deserted streets piled two-feet

high with uncollected garbage and saw many rows of stores and houses gutted in the most recent as well as in the August disturbances. He was overcome, Gandhi said, by 'a sinking feeling at the mass madness that can turn man into less than a brute'. Yet he remained an optimist. This could not go on much longer; he thought the citizens of Calcutta were already beginning to sicken at their own hideous excesses.

He was going to Noakhali, the rural area where Moslems had killed Hindus, forcibly converted Hindus to Islam, ravished Hindu women and burned Hindu homes and temples. 'It was the cry of outraged womanhood,' he told his prayer meeting, 'that has peremptorily called me to Noakhali . . . I am not going to leave Bengal until the last embers of the trouble are stamped out. I may stay on here for a whole year or more. If necessary, I will die here. But I will not acquiesce in failure. If the only effect of my presence in the flesh is to make people look up to me in hope and expectation which I can do nothing to vindicate, it would be far better that my eyes were closed in death.'

Many members of the congregation wiped tears from their eyes.

But worse woes were in store for the sorrowing Mahatma. In the neighbouring province of Bihar, with a population of 31,000,000 Hindus and 5,000,000 Moslems, the events in Noakhali and Tippera had incensed the majority community; October 25th was declared 'Noakhali Day'. Speeches by Congressmen and sensational newspaper headlines whipped the Hindus into hysteria and thousands paraded the streets and country lanes shouting 'Blood for blood'. In the next week, 'the number of persons officially verified as killed by rioters' wrote the Delhi correspondent of the London *Times*, was 4580; Gandhi later put the total

at more than ten thousand. They were preponderantly Moslem.

The news of the Bihar atrocities reached Gandhi in Calcutta and filled him with grief. He addressed a manifesto to the Biharis: 'Bihar of my dreams seems to have falsified them . . . The misdeeds of the Bihari Hindus may justify Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah's taunt that the Congress is a Hindu organization in spite of its boast that it has in its ranks a few Sikhs, Moslems, Christians, Parsis and others . . . Let not Bihar, which has done so much to raise the prestige of Congress, be the first to dig its grave.'

As penance, Gandhi announced, he would keep himself 'on the lowest diet possible', and this would become 'a fast unto death if the erring Biharis have not turned over a new leaf'.

Expecting vengeance in Bengal for the horrors of Bihar, Nehru and Patel, and Liaqat Ali Khan and Abdur Rab Nishtar, two Moslem members of the interim government, hurried by air from Delhi to Calcutta. Lord Wavell also came. The sacred Islamic festival of the Id impended when Moslems might rise to fervour and frenzy. The ministers appealed to the populace to remain calm. Soldiers patrolled the city and countryside.

Nehru and Patel begged Gandhi not to fast unto death; they and the nation, needed him.

From Calcutta, the four ministers flew to Bihar. Infuriated by what he saw and heard, Prime Minister Nehru threatened to bomb Bihar from the air if the Hindus did not desist from killings. 'But that was the British way', Gandhi commented. 'By suppressing the riots with the aid of the military they would be suppressing India's freedom,' he said. 'And yet what was Panditji to do if Congress had lost control over the people?'

Nehru announced he would remain in Bihar until the

province became calm. On November 5th, Gandhi sent a letter to him there saying, 'The news from Bihar has shaken me . . . If even half of what one hears is true, it shows that Bihar has forgotten humanity . . . My inner voice tells me, "You may not live to be a witness to this senseless slaughter . . . Does it not mean that your day is over?" The logic of the argument is driving me irresistibly towards a fast.'

The Id holiday passed quietly in Calcutta and elsewhere. Reassuring messages reached the Mahatma from Bihar. His duty lay in Noakhali where frightened Hindus were fleeing before Moslem violence. Fear is the enemy of freedom and democracy. Non-violent bravery is the antidote to violence. He would teach the Noakhali Hindus to be brave by being brave with them. Equally important, Gandhi wanted to know whether he could influence Moslems. If they were not accessible to the spirit of non-violence and non-retaliation and brotherhood, how could there be a free, united India?

'Supposing someone killed me,' Gandhi said. 'You will gain nothing by killing someone in retaliation. And if you think over it, who can kill Gandhi except Gandhi himself? No one can destroy the soul.'

Did he think a Moslem in Noakhali might murder him and was he afraid that in revenge Hindus would massacre Moslems throughout India?

The impulse to go to Noakhali was irresistible. He abandoned the idea of a fast for Bihar.

Gandhi left Calcutta on the morning of November 6th. Noakhali is one of the least accessible areas of India. It lies in the water-logged delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers. Transport and daily living present gigantic difficulties. Many villages can be reached only by small boats. Even the bullock cart, symbol of retarded India, cannot traverse the roads of the district. Phillips Talbot,

correspondent of the Institute of Current Affairs of New York, spent four days travelling by rail, steamer, bicycle, hand-poled ferry and on foot from Calcutta to a settlement where the Mahatma had pitched his camp. The region, forty miles square, is thick with human beings, 2,500,000 of them; 80 per cent are Moslem. It was rent by civil strife and steeped in religious bitterness. Some villages had been laid in ruins.

Gandhi deliberately accepted the physical and spiritual challenge presented by this remote region. Month after month he persevered. 'My present mission', he wrote from Noakhali on December 5th, 'is the most difficult and complicated one of my life . . . I am prepared for any eventuality. "Do or Die" has to be put to the test here. "Do" here means Hindus and Mussulmans should learn to live together in peace and amity. Otherwise, I should die in the attempt.'

Several ministers of the Bengal government and a group of Gandhi's secretaries and assistants had accompanied him to Noakhali. He dispersed his disciples among the villages and remained along with Professor Nirmal Bose who was his Bengali interpreter, Parasuram, his permanent stenographer, and Manu Gandhi. He said he would prepare his own food and do his own massage. Friends protested that he needed police protection against Moslems; Sushila Nayyar, his doctor, should remain near him, they said. No, she and her brother Pyarelal and Sucheta Kripalani and even young Abha, the wife of Kanu Gandhi and Kanu himself, each of them must settle alone in a village, often a hostile, isolated village and by their example and love wean it from the ways of violence. Pyarelal was laid low with malaria. He sent a note to Gandhi asking whether Sushila could not come to nurse him. 'Those who go to the villages have to go there with a determination to live or die there,'

Gandhi replied. 'If they must fall ill they have to get well there or die there. Then alone could the going have any meaning. In practice this means that they must be content with home remedies or the therapy of nature's "five elements". Dr. Sushila has her own village to look to. Her services are not at present meant for the members of our party. They are pre-mortgaged to the village folk of East Bengal.' He was subjecting himself to the same cruel, unyielding discipline.

Gandhi lived in forty-nine villages during his Noakhali pilgrimage. He would rise at four in the morning, walk three or four miles on bare feet to a village, stay there one or two or three days talking and praying incessantly with the inhabitants and then trek to the next village. Arrived in a place, he would go to a peasant's hut, preferably a Moslem's hut, and ask to be taken in with his companions. If rebuffed he would try the next hut. He subsisted on local fruits and vegetables and goat's milk if he could get it. This was his life from November 7th, 1946, to March 2nd, 1947. He had just passed his seventy-seventh birthday.

The walking was difficult. Gandhi developed chilblains. But he rarely put on sandals. The Noakhali troubles arose because he had failed to cure the people by non-violence. This was therefore a pilgrimage of penance and in penance the pilgrim wears no shoes. Sometimes hostile elements strewed broken glass, brambles and filth in his path. He did not blame them; they had been misled by their politicians. In many places, walking involved the crossing of bridges built over low, marshy land. The bridges stood on bamboo stilts often ten or fifteen feet high and consisted of four or five bamboo poles about four inches in diameter lashed together with jute rope or vines. These crude, shaking structures occasionally had one side-rail for sup-

port often not. Once Gandhi's foot slipped and he might have fallen to the muddy earth far below, but he nimbly regained his balance. To become proficient and fearless in such crossings he practised, wherever he could, on bridges a few inches above the ground.

Mr. Arthur Henderson told the House of Commons on November 4th, 1946, that the dead in the Noakhali and contiguous Tippera districts had not yet been counted but 'will', according to estimates, 'be low in the three figures category'. The Bengal government put the number of casualties at 218; some families, however, hid their victims out of fear. Over ten thousand houses were looted in the two districts. In Tippera 9895 persons were forcibly converted to Islam; in Noakhali inexact data suggested that the number of converts was greater. Thousands of Hindu women were abducted and married to Moslems against their will. Gandhi was deeply depressed by the conversions and abductions.

To convert Hindu women Moslems broke their bangles and removed the 'happiness mark' on their foreheads which showed they were not widows. Hindu men were compelled to grow beards, to twist their loincloths the Moslem instead of the Hindu way, and to recite the *Koran*. Stone idols were smashed and Hindu temples desecrated. Worst of all, Hindus were made to slaughter their cows if they had any or, in any case, to eat meat. It was felt that the Hindu community would not accept back into its fold one who had killed a sacred beast or partaken of its flesh.

In the beginning, several of Gandhi's associates suggested that he should urge Hindus to abandon the affected areas and settle in other provinces. He passionately rejected such defeatism. To exchange populations would be a recognition of the impossibility of keeping India united. Moreover, it would deny a basic tenet of Gandhi's faith :

that an affinity exists or can easily be established between people who are different or think themselves different. Love and tolerance between the unlike are greater virtues than between the like.

After he had studied the problem in Noakhali, Gandhi decided it was necessary to choose one Moslem and one Hindu in each village who would guarantee the safety of all the inhabitants and die, if need be, in their protection. With this in view, he interviewed members of both religious communities. He was once sitting on the floor of a hut in the midst of a group of Moslems and discoursing on the beauties of non-violence. Sucheta Kripalani passed a note to the Mahatma saying that the man on his right had killed a number of Hindus in the recent riots. Gandhi smiled faintly and went on speaking. Unless you hang the murderer—and Gandhi did not believe in hanging—you must try to cure him with goodness. If you imprison him there will be others. Gandhi knew he was dealing with a social disease; the liquidation of one or many individuals could not extirpate it. The criminals who feared retribution would remain on the highway and repeat their crimes. Gandhi therefore forgave them and told them so, and told the Hindus to forgive them; indeed he told them that he shared their guilt because he had failed to remove Hindu-Moslem antagonisms.

The world is full of such antagonisms and the ordinary individual is their victim as well as their agent. 'But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you . . . For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?' Thus Jesus spoke. Thus Gandhi lived.

Generations back, the ancestors of many Noakhali Moslems to whom Gandhi was appealing had been Hindus and

were forcibly converted to the *Koran* by the sword. Either they retained part of the Hindu temper or the Gandhian method has a universal application. To one village, for instance, Gandhi had sent a young Moslem disciple, Miss Amtul Salam. She found that Moslems continued to mistreat their Hindu neighbours. 'In the Gandhian tradition', reports Phillips Talbot, 'she decided not to eat until Moslems returned a sacrificial sword which during the October upheaval had been looted from a Hindu home. Now, a fast concentrates very heavy social pressure on its objects, as Indians have long since learned. The sword was never found. Possibly it had been dropped into a pond. Whatever had happened, the nervous Moslem residents were almost ready to agree to anything when Gandhi arrived in that village on the twenty-fifth day of Miss Salam's fast. Her doctor reported that life was ebbing. After hours of discussion (which ... Gandhi took as seriously as the Cabinet Delegation negotiations) Gandhi persuaded the village leaders to sign a pledge that they would never molest Hindus again.'

The return of the sword would have symbolized amity, Gandhi explained.

Gandhi and his associates were working against heavy odds. In the beginning of his tour, Moslems flocked to his prayer meetings. But politicians in Calcutta discouraged this practice. And Mohammedan priests inveighed against it. They made the charge that the Mahatma was suborning the faithful. Sometimes Gandhi would interrupt his services to let the Moslems withdraw temporarily to the fringe of the congregation and turn west to Mecca and say their prayers. He had an attraction for Moslems which neither political Moslems nor religious Moslems relished.

Gandhi addressed his meetings in Hindustani. Then an interpreter gave the Bengali translation. Gandhi would

sit on the prayer platform during the translation and make notes of his own speech which he would then publish: 'Some Moslems feared that he had come to suppress them. He could assure them that he had never suppressed anyone in his life.'

'I have told our people,' Gandhi said in an interview, 'not to depend on military and police aid. You have to uphold democracy, and democracy and dependence on the military and police are incompatible.' He wanted to restore a sense of popular security by changing the minds of the people. 'For me,' he told a friend, 'if this thing is pulled through it will be the crowning act of my life . . . I don't want to return from Bengal in a defeatist way. I would rather die, if need be, at the hand of an assassin.'

At times, his closest co-workers were afraid of what might happen to them alone in remote villages. 'You are not to rush into danger unnecessarily,' he instructed them, 'but unflinchingly face whatever comes in the natural course.'

January 6th was Gandhi's day of silence and his prayer meeting address was read to the congregation while he sat and listened and nodded assent. They were in the little village of Chandipur and he told them why he was there: 'I have only one object in view and it is a clear one: namely that God should purify the hearts of Hindus and Moslems and the two communities should be free from suspicion and fear of one another. Please join with me in this prayer and say that God is the Lord of us both and that He may give us success.'

Why did he have to come such a long way to do this? 'My answer is that during my tour I wish to assure the villagers to the best of my capacity that I bear not the least ill-will towards any. I can prove this only by living and moving among those who mistrust me.'

In this village Gandhi received information that Hindus who had fled during the riots were beginning to return. On the other hand, attendance at prayer meetings was dwindling. 'But', Gandhi wrote, reporting his own speech, 'he said that even then there would be no reason for him to give up his mission in despair. He would then roam from village to village taking his spinning wheel. With him it was an act of service to God.'

On January 17th the newspapers stated that during the last six days Gandhi had been working twenty hours out of every twenty-four. He had spent each of those days in a different village and the people were flocking to his hut for advice, comfort and confessions.

At Narayanpur village, a Moslem gave him shelter for the night and food during the day. Gandhi thanked him publicly. Such hospitality was becoming more frequent.

His Moslem host asked Gandhi why he did not come to an understanding with Jinnah instead of subjecting himself to such a strenuous pilgrimage. A leader, he replied, was made by his followers. The people must make peace among themselves and 'then their desire for neighbourly peace would be reflected by their leaders . . . If a neighbour was ailing would they run to the Congress or the League to ask them what should be done?'

Would not literacy help, Gandhi was asked. He held that it was not enough. The Germans were literate yet they succumbed to Hitler. 'It is not literacy or learning that makes a man,' Gandhi said, 'but education for real life. What would it matter if they knew everything but did not know how to live in brotherliness with their neighbours?'

'If the question is between taking one's own life or that of the assailant, which would you advise?'

'I have no doubt in my mind', Gandhi declared, 'that the first should be the choice.'

Five thousand persons came to his prayer meeting on January 22nd in the village of Paniala where, several weeks earlier, a large intercommunity dinner had taken place with Hindus, Moslems and untouchables sitting shoulder to shoulder. 'What in your opinion is the cause of the communal riots?' someone asked.

'The idiocy of both communities,' he replied.

The prayer meeting at Muraim on January 24th was the largest of the pilgrimage. Gandhi attributed it to the successful fast of Miss Amtul Salam, who was a devout Moslem and a member of the Mahatma's ashram.

'What should a woman do if she is attacked?' Gandhi was asked at Palla on January 27th. 'Should she commit suicide?'

'Surrender' he answered, 'has no room in my plan of life. A woman should most certainly take her own life rather than surrender.'

Was she to carry poison with her or a knife?

'It is not for me to prescribe the means,' Gandhi said. 'And behind the approval of suicide in such circumstances is the belief that one whose mind is prepared for even suicide will have the requisite courage for such mental resistance and such internal purity that her assailant will be disarmed.'

Sometimes economic questions were raised at prayer meetings. Did Gandhi think the landowner's share in crops should be reduced from one-half to one-third?

Yes, he welcomed the move. 'The land belongs to the Lord of us all and therefore to the worker on it. But until that ideal state of things came about the movement towards the reduction of the landlord's portion was in the right direction.' Many of the landlords were Hindus,

and the riots were partly caused by resentment against high rents.

Dr. Sushila Nayyar was stationed in the village of Changirgaon. She wanted to go to the hospital in the Sevagram Ashram which she had set up, but the Moslem patients begged her to stay and she stayed. She also reported that Moslems were, of their own accord, returning some of the loot they took in October. 'A happy omen,' Gandhi called it. If the infection spread, the courts would have less work to do. He aspired to no truce imposed by the military; he wanted a change of heart.

Four young Moslem men came to Gandhi's hut for an exchange of views. Their visit gave him joy; he sought intimate contact with the people. He told them, incidentally that the figures on Moslem killings of Hindus in Noakhali had been exaggerated; there were not thousands. The Hindus had behaved much worse in Bihar.

At Srinagar village on February 5th the volunteers had erected a platform and canopy. This was a waste of labour and money, Gandhi chided them. 'All I need,' he told the prayer meeting, 'is a raised seat with something clean and soft to rest my fatless and muscleless bones.' Then he laughed and showed his toothless gums.

He lectured next day's congregation on cleanliness. He liked to walk barefoot on the village streets and on the road, but why did they spit and clear their noses on them? He sometimes had to wear sandals. No doubt, chronic poverty was responsible for the prevalence of disease in India, but chronic breach of the laws of sanitation was no less responsible, he said.

The poorer Moslems attended Gandhi's meetings in larger numbers than the rich. Tales reached him that the propertied and educated Moslems were threatening the poor with economic sanctions. They displayed anti-

Gandhi posters. Returning from Bishkatali in the Tippera district on February 20th, Gandhi walked through beautiful bamboo woods and coconut groves. Hanging from trees he saw placards reading, 'Remember Bihar, Leave Tippera Immediately'; 'Repeatedly you have been warned, Yet you insist on roaming from house to house. You must leave for you own good'; 'Go where you are needed. Your hypocrisy will not be tolerated. Accept Pakistan.'

Yet crowds at meetings grew in size.

In Raipura, on a Sunday, Gandhi was present at a dinner given by Hindu merchants to two thousand persons, including caste Hindus, Moslems, Harijans and Christians. The local Moslem priest took Gandhi to the village mosque.

Elsewhere a student asked Gandhi whether it was not true that Christianity and Islam were progressive religions and Hinduism static or retrogressive. 'No,' he replied, 'I have noticed no definite progress in any religion. The world would not be the shambles it has become if the religions of the world were progressive.'

'If there is only one God,' a questioner said, 'should there not be only one religion?'

'A tree has a million leaves,' Gandhi replied. 'There are as many religions as there are men and women, but they are all rooted in God.'

A written query was handed to the Mahatma: 'Should religious instruction form part of the school curriculum as approved by the State? Do you favour separate schools for children belonging to different denominations for facility of religious instruction?'

Gandhi replied, 'I do not believe in state religion even though the whole community has one religion. State interference will probably always be unwelcome. Religion is purely a personal matter . . . I am also opposed to State

aid partly or wholly to religious bodies. For I know that an institution or group which does not manage to finance its own religious teaching is a stranger to true religion. This does not mean that State schools would not give ethical teaching. The fundamental ethics are common to all religions.'

Moslem critics warned him not to discuss purdah. How dare a Hindu tell their women to expose their faces? He nevertheless discussed it. Segregation of women was a species of violence and led to other forms of compulsion.

On March 2nd, 1947, Gandhi left Noakhali for Bihar province. He promised to return some day. He promised to return because his mission had not been completed. He had not established the brotherhood of Hindus and Moslems in Noakhali. Relations had improved perceptibly but insufficiently.

Gandhi's task in Noakhali consisted in restoring inner calm so that the refugee Hindus could return and feel safe and so that Moslems would not attack them again. The malady was deep; the violent eruptions, however, were infrequent and ephemeral. Gandhi, therefore, did not despair. He felt that the local communities, undisturbed by outside political propaganda, could live in peace.

The call of Noakhali had been insistent. Gandhi might have sent a message from Delhi or preached a sermon. But he was a man of action, a Karma yogi. He believed that the difference between what we do and what we could do would suffice to solve most of the world's problems. All his life he endeavoured to eliminate that difference. He gave his maximum.

CHAPTER XVI

ASIA'S MESSAGE TO THE WEST

LATE in November 1946 Prime Minister Attlee summoned Nehru, Defence Minister Baldev Singh, Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan to 10 Downing Street for an extraordinary conference.

The Constituent Assembly was to meet in New Delhi on December 9th; Jinnah had repeatedly declared that the Moslem League would boycott it. The object of the Downing Street conference was to bring the Moslem League into the Constituent Assembly. For if the Assembly was a predominantly Congress affair, with the Moslems outside, how, the argument ran, could England transfer power to it and leave India?

Originally, the Moslem League had accepted the Cabinet Mission's plan of May 16th, 1946, and thereby agreed to go into the Constituent Assembly. Later, however, it had withdrawn.

The issue on which Jinnah withdrew from the Assembly provoked hot discussions and fierce hatreds. What was it?

Article 19 of the Cabinet Mission's plan stipulated that the Constituent Assembly would first meet in New Delhi for a short, formal session and then break up into three sections corresponding to three groups of provinces: Group A comprised the centre, the heart of India and was overwhelmingly Hindu; Group B included the North-west Frontier Province, Sind and the Punjab and was largely Moslem in population; Group C, in the north-east, consisted of Bengal and Assam.

Each section would draft a constitution for its group of provinces. But if a province did not like the constitution it could stay out of the group.

Thus Hindu Assam would be required to sit in Section

C with Moslem Bengal and participate in the drafting of a constitution for Group C. But should Assam dislike the final constitution it could secede from Group C and stand alone, or, possibly, join Group A. The sections were compulsory, the groups voluntary.

Gandhi objected. He said it was compulsion and a waste of effort. Suppose Bengal, which would have a big majority in Section C, drew up a constitution that tied Assam to Group C. And why should the North-west Frontier Province, which, though predominantly Moslem had always been anti-Jinnah, be forced to sit with the Punjab and Sind?

The sections and groups were introduced into the Cabinet Mission's plan in order to satisfy Jinnah; they were a half-way or perhaps quarter-way house to Pakistan. They divided India into three federated units. For that very reason Gandhi rejected them.

While Gandhi was in Noakhali, the Congress organizations of neighbouring Assam sent emissaries to him to ask for guidance. He told them bluntly to refuse to go into the sections even if the national Congress leaders told them to go in.

It was to resolve this difficulty that Nehru, Baldev Singh, Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan made their hasty aeroplane trip to London early in December.

During his stay in London, Jinnah declared publicly that he expected India to be divided into a Hindu state and a Moslem state. He shared Mr. Churchill's apprehensions, he added, 'regarding the possibility of civil strife and riots in India.' Both halves of the declarations were programme rather than prophecy.

There had already been enough riots to lead the British to expect more unless Jinnah got the half-Pakistan or quarter-Pakistan implicit in the sections and groups. But

although Attlee succeeded, after great exertion, in bringing the Congress and League ministers into his Downing Street office, the conference ended in disagreement.

Attlee thereupon announced on December 6th that if the Constituent Assembly adopted a constitution without the co-operation of the Moslem League 'His Majesty's Government could not, of course, contemplate . . . forcing such a constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country.'

This meant that one part of India would accept the constitution and another part might reject it. Again India faced partition.

Soon after Nehru's return from London he made the long journey from New Delhi to the village of Srirampur in Noakhali and, on December 27th, 1946, reported to the Mahatma on the historic failure to agree in Downing Street.

But Gandhi repeated his advice to Assam and to the Sikhs, to remain aloof from the constitutional sections and groups. He regarded them as devices to split India and refused to countenance anything that contributed to division.

The All India Congress Committee, however, resolved on January 6th, 1947, by a vote of 99 against 52, to accept the sections.

Gandhi's influence in Congress was waning.

Gandhi had gone to Noakhali to reinforce the human bond between Hindus and Moslems before politics and legal enactments tore it asunder. He dreaded the consequences of the bisection of India. In New York, on October 16th, 1949, Prime Minister Nehru stated that he would have fought to the end against the establishment of Pakistan if he had foreseen the dire results that flowed from it.

Perhaps Gandhi intuitively anticipated these results. The division of India caused the violent death of hundreds of thousands of Indians. It caused fifteen million refugees to wander unhappily from their homes into distant uncertainty. It provoked the war in Kashmir. It brought gigantic economic losses to all parts of the country. It fed a continuing religious-nationalistic bitterness with disastrous potentialities.

Even though the Congress leaders were not as perceptive as Gandhi they knew that no good could come of partition. Why then did they acquiesce in Attlee's December 6th statement?

In 1942, Congress President Maulana Azad said to me in Nehru's presence that Congress abhorred the idea of the division of India but could not reject it indefinitely if the Moslems wanted it. He was opposed, however, he said, to 'divorce before marriage'. First they must try to live together in a united independent India and if it did not work then there would be time enough to separate.

Now Nehru, Patel, Azad and the other Congress members had had a taste of marriage; they had been sitting in the Government with Moslem Leaguers who obviously entered the Cabinet to disrupt it. The experience was a harrowing one. It frayed the nerves of the Congress leaders. It destroyed their faith in Congress-League collaboration.

Gandhi still believed in Hindu-Moslem friendship. Nehru and Patel were reconciled to the constitutional sections knowing that this might be the beginning of Pakistan but seeing no way out except civil war. They hoped Jinnah would be happy with the division into three federated states and forgo Pakistan.

The next step was a statement by Prime Minister Attlee in the House of Commons on February 20th, 1947, tha

England would leave India 'by a date not later than June 1948'. Simultaneously, it became known that Lord (Admiral Louis) Mountbatten, a great-grandson of Queen Victoria, would succeed Lord Wavell as Viceroy; he would be the twentieth and last British Viceroy of India.

To whom would Britain transfer power? On this key question Attlee, according to Lord Pethick-Lawrence, 'was less precise'. His Majesty's Government, Attlee asserted, would have to determine whether power should be handed over 'to some form of central government' or in some areas 'to the existing provincial governments' or 'in some other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people'.

Nehru found this rather vague but he welcomed the whole statement as 'wise and courageous'; it removed 'all misconception and suspicion'.

The Working Committee, in its session during the first week of March, officially approved of Attlee's new utterance and, in view of the impending 'swift transfer of power', invited the Moslem League to talks. Simultaneously, the Committee took cognizance of the widespread bloodshed in the populous Punjab. Indeed, it took such a sombre and serious view of events there that it envisaged 'a division of the Punjab into two provinces, so that the predominantly Moslem part may be separated from the predominantly non-Moslem part'.

The Punjab situation was ominous. According to a reply given on May 21st, 1946, in the House of Commons by the Earl of Listowel, the Secretary of State for India and Burma, 4014 persons had been killed in disturbances in India between November 18th, 1946, and May 18th, 1947, and of these, 3024 were killed in fighting between Moslems and Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab.

Disturbed by events further west, Gandhi left east

Bengal for Bihar. Without a day's respite, he began a tour of the province. In village and city, he chastised the Bihari Hindus. They 'had forgotten in a fit of insanity that they were human beings'.

One day he listened for hours to reports by Moslems and Hindus about continued tension. Nobody could assure him 'that things had completely settled down to complete normality'. The recital so tired him mentally that he had to take a brief nap before services.

Another day he apologized for coming to prayers in a car; the Biharis 'should know the art of welcoming people in a quiet and dignified manner instead of the present embarrassing manner'. Thousands had tried to come near enough to touch him or kiss his feet.,

Wherever he went he preached repentance and restitution. All kidnapped Moslem women should be returned. Compensation should be paid for property looted or destroyed.

A telegram arrived from a Hindu warning the Mahatma not to condemn Hindus for what they had done. Gandhi mentioned the telegram at his prayer meeting and said, 'I would forfeit my claim to being a Hindu if I bolstered the wrongdoing of fellow Hindus or of any other fellow being.' He cautioned them against avenging the killings of Hindus in the Punjab.

He knew that even worshipful Hindus were irritated by his message of love. Nevertheless, he began collecting money at all his meetings for the relief of aggrieved Moslems. In Patna, two thousand rupees were gathered at one assembly and a number of women contributed their personal jewellery.

Before he spoke in any locality, Gandhi visited the ruined homes of Moslems or Moslem families who had suffered death or physical injury. The deeper he

penetrated into the Bihar tragedy the more it obsessed him; he would not leave the province until 'both the communities had become friendly with one another and no longer needed his services'. He insisted that Hindus should call back the Moslems who had fled and rebuild their huts and re-establish them in business. He summoned Hindus guilty of atrocities to surrender.

The day Gandhi arrived in the town of Masurhi 'fifty persons' he reported, 'who were wanted in connection with the riot cases' surrendered to the police. He welcomed that, and hoped others would follow suit. If the criminals lacked the courage to surrender to the authorities they should come to him or to Ghaffar Khan, 'the Frontier Gandhi', or to General Shaw Nawaz of the Indian National Army, who were accompanying him on the tour, and confess.

As his car moved across the countryside, groups of Hindus signalled him to stop and gave him purses for Moslems. This was the way to stop violence, not with the aid of the military and the police.

Hindus were boycotting Moslem stores and firms. He begged them to abandon such intolerance. He asked them to recant publicly in order to reassure the Moslems. 'But he was sorry to say that not one Hindu got up to give the needed assurance . . . There was little cause for wonder, therefore, if the Moslems were afraid to return to their villages.' He warned them that 'Indians might lose the golden apple of independence'. There was renewed agitation among Biharis to avenge the Moslem attacks on Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab. 'If ever you become mad again,' he cried out, 'you must destroy me first.' It was his fourth week in Bihar.

On March 22nd, 1947, Lord Mountbatten, handsome in white naval uniform, arrived in New Delhi with his wife,

Edwina, the Vicereine; their charm and informality and his first political declaration made a fine impression. Twenty-four hours later, Jinnah stated publicly that partition was the only solution; otherwise there would be 'terrific disasters'.

Within four days of his arrival, Mountbatten invited Gandhi and Jinnah to the palace. Gandhi was deep in Bihar. Mountbatten offered to bring him out by aeroplane. Gandhi said he preferred a means of locomotion used by the millions. At the station, before the train left Patna, the Mahatma collected money for Harijan relief.

Gandhi conferred with Mountbatten for two and a quarter hours on March 31st.

The next day Gandhi visited the Asian Relations Conference which had been sitting in New Delhi since March 23rd; delegates attended from most countries of Asia and from five constituent republics of the Soviet Union. Asked to speak, he said he would deliver an address at the closing session the next day, but if there were any questions now he would try to answer them.

Did he believe in One World and could it succeed under present conditions?

'I will not like to live in this world if it is not to be one,' Gandhi replied. 'Certainly I should like to see this dream realized in my lifetime. I hope that all the representatives who have come here from the Asian countries will strive their level best to have only one world.' If they worked with 'fixed determination' the dream could come true.

Answering a Chinese delegate's question about a permanent Asia Institute, he drifted far from the subject and discussed what was uppermost in his mind. 'I am sorry,' he said, 'that I have to refer to the conditions we see today [in India]. We do not know how to keep peace between

ourselves . . . We think we must resort to the law of the jungle. It is an experience which I would not like you to carry to your respective countries'.

He turned to the problem of Asia. 'All the Asian representatives have come together,' he began. 'Is it in order to wage a war against Europe, against America, or against other non-Asiatics? I say most emphatically, "No," this is not India's mission . . . It will be a sorry thing if we go away from this conference without a fixed determination that Asia shall live and live as free as every Western nation. I just wanted to say that conferences like the present should meet regularly and if you ask me where, India is the place.'

The next day he delivered his promised address before the conference. He first apologized for speaking English. He admitted that he had hoped to collect his thoughts but had no time. On the way to the meeting he had asked Ghaffar Khan for a piece of paper and pencil to make some notes. 'I got a pen instead of a pencil. I tried to scribble a few words. You will be sorry to hear that that piece of paper is not by my side though I remember what I wanted to say.'

Then he rambled: They were assembled in a city, but cities were not India. The real truth was in the villages and in the untouchable homes of the villages. The villages, to be sure, were dungheaps full of 'miserable specimens of humanity with lustreless eyes'. But in them was wisdom.

The East, he proceeded, had submitted to a cultural conquest by the West. Yet the West had originally received its wisdom from the East: Zoroaster, Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Krishna, Rama and lesser lights.

He asked the conference to understand the message of Asia. 'It is not to be learned through Western spectacles

or through the atomic bomb. If you want to give a message to the West it must be the message of love and the message of truth. I do not want merely to appeal to your head,' he said suddenly. 'I want to capture your heart.'

He hoped Asia's message of love and truth would conquer the West. 'This conquest will be loved by the West itself. The West is today pining for wisdom.'

It was structurally a poor speech but full of essential wisdom and of the essence of Gandhi. Most of the delegates had probably not heard such simple, sincere words for many years.

Between March 31st and April 12th Gandhi conferred with Mountbatten six times. Jinnah had an equal number of talks with the hard-working Viceroy.

What did they talk about? 'Before I would get down to any actual solution of the problem,' Mountbatten said in an address before the Council of the Royal Empire Society in London on October 6th, 1948, when his task in India was done, 'I just wanted to talk to them to get to know them, to get together and gossip. Thus Gandhi told me about his early life in South Africa, Mr. Jinnah about his early life in London and I told them a bit about my early life. Then, when I felt I had some sort of understanding with the men I was dealing with, I started talking to them about the problem before us.'

The problem was the fate of 400,000,000 people, the fate of India, perhaps the fate of Asia. Mountbatten's assignment was to take Britain out of India by June 1948. The schedule required him to propose a solution by the end of 1947. This would allow the British Parliament enough time to pass the necessary legislation for the liberation of India by June 1948. But on the spot, he told the Royal Empire Society, he and his advisers agreed that this would be too slow. Trouble had started, he said,

on August 16th, 1946, Jinnah's Direct Action Day. There followed the massacres of Hindus in Noakhali and Hindu reprisals in Bihar; then 'the Moslems massacred the Sikhs at Rawalpindi [in the Punjab]' and a rising took place in the North-west Frontier Province. 'I arrived out there,' Mountbatten stated, 'to find this terrible pendulum of massacres swinging wider and wider; if it was not stopped there was no telling where India might end. . . .

'Personally,' Mountbatten continued, 'I was convinced that the right solution for them would have been to keep a United India' under the May 16th, 1946, plan of the British Cabinet Mission. But the plan presupposed the co-operation and goodwill of all parties. 'Mr. Jinnah,' however, Lord Mountbatten told the Royal Empire Society, 'made it abundantly clear from the first moment that so long as he lived he would never accept a United India. He demanded partition, he insisted on Pakistan.' Congress, on the other hand, favoured an undivided India. But, Mountbatten stated, the Congress leaders agreed that they would accept partition in order to avoid a civil war. The Viceroy 'was convinced that the Moslem League would have fought'.

But how was India to be divided? Congress refused to let large non-Moslem areas go to Pakistan. 'That automatically meant,' Mountbatten explained, 'a partition of the great provinces of the Punjab and Bengal.'

'When I told Mr. Jinnah,' Mountbatten said in his historic review before the Royal Empire Society, 'that I had their provisional agreement to partition he was overjoyed. When I said that it logically followed that this would involve partition of the Punjab and Bengal he was horrified. He produced the strongest arguments why these provinces should not be partitioned. He said that they had national characteristics and that partition would

be disastrous. I agreed, but I said how much more must I now feel that the same considerations applied to the partitioning of the whole of India. He did not like that and started explaining why India had to be partitioned and so we went round and round the mulberry bush until finally he realized that either he could have a United India with an unpartitioned Punjab and Bengal or a divided India with a partitioned Punjab and Bengal and he finally accepted the latter solution.'

Gandhi did not approve of any kind of partition in April 1947 and refused until his death to approve of it.

On April 15th, at the request of Mountbatten, Gandhi and Jinnah issued a joint statement deploring the 'recent acts of lawlessness and violence that have brought the utmost disgrace on the fair name of India' and denouncing 'for all time the use of force to achieve political ends'. This came at the end of a fortnight in which Jinnah had convinced Mountbatten that if he did not achieve his political ends India would be rent by civil war.

During that fortnight, Gandhi lived in the untouchables' quarter on Kingsway, Delhi, and conducted a public prayer meeting there every evening. The first evening he asked those present whether they would object to the recitation of some verses from the *Koran*. Several objectors raised their hands. They said he had no authority to intone an Islamic holy book at Hindu services. Gandhi thereupon broke off the meeting. He put the same question the second evening. Again there were objectors; again he refused to pray with the congregation. The same thing happened the third evening.

The fourth evening nobody objected. The objectors had withdrawn. If all members of the congregation on the previous three days had objected, Gandhi explained, he would have read from the *Koran* and been prepared

'to die at their hands with the name of God on his lips if they wanted to kill him. But he wished to avoid a clash on the prayer ground between those who wanted the prayers to be held and those who objected. In the end non-violence prevailed'.

He received angry letters, threatening letters, some of them anonymous. He was a bad Hindu, one said. He was a Moslem 'fifth columnist' in Hinduism, another said. A third was addressed to 'Mohamed Gandhi'.

'How can it be a sin to chant God's name in Arabic?' he argued. Hindu-Moslem unity was his life's goal. 'If Hindustan meant a land only for the Hindus and Pakistan only for Moslems, Pakistan and Hindustan would then be lands flowing with poison.'

On April 13th Gandhi returned to Bihar.

Action for non-violence and against hate was now the only political work that made sense. Unless Gandhi could prove that Hindus and Moslems lived in peace, Jinnah was right and Pakistan inevitable. Mountbatten would not succumb to the most brilliant debating points; Hindu-Moslem tolerance had to be demonstrated in life.

A victory for non-violence in Bihar or Bengal or the Punjab would spell success in the battle for the mind of Mountbatten and Britain and of those in Congress who had lost faith in a united India. This was a case where the people would really decide a major issue — not by their votes but by their behaviour, and Gandhi still hoped to alter their behaviour. The question was: Is India a nation or a country inhabited by warring religious communities?

One of the world's worst curses is the influence of past centuries. In India, the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteeth centuries have survived to plague the tweentieth. Religious passions, provincial loyalties and

princely states exercised the same debilitating, divisive influence they had in Europe before the modern age of industrialism and nationalism. India, with four hundred million inhabitants, had only three million industrial workers. The country lacked cohesion because nobody possessed enough unifying power or a sufficiently attractive unifying idea to overcome the centrifugal trends of a backward land. Gandhi, the towering symbol of unifying nationalism, was himself a mingling of an obsolete past, a struggling present and the unborn world of his high ideals.

Jinnah's strength was the threat of civil war. The riots were a preview. The only hope of preserving the unity of India was to pacify the people and thus prove Jinnah's threat an empty one.

Gandhi approached this task without flinching and alone. History was asking whether India was a nation.

CHAPTER XVII

TRAGIC VICTORY

It was very hot in Bihar in April, and Gandhi could not stand the strain of extensive travel among the villages. But he would have to go if the Hindus did not repent and bring back the Moslems who had fled in fear. He received a letter suggesting that he should retire to the forest as Krishna had done; the country had lost faith in non-violence, the correspondent stated, and the *Bhagavad Gita*, moreover, did not teach non-violence. He reported this to his prayer meeting in Patna.

He heard of renewed rioting in Noakhali.

Yet several developments encouraged him. At Gandhi's request General Shah Nawaz, a Moslem and hero of the

Indian National Army, had remained in Bihar. Shah Nawaz now said that Moslems were returning to their villages and that Hindus and Sikhs were helping them. A Sikh had been invited to a mosque.

This information made Gandhi feel that 'if the Hindus were true Hindus and befriended the Moslems the present all-enveloping fire would be extinguished'. Bihar was a big province. Its example would inspire others. Peace in Bihar would 'dissolve' the trouble in Calcutta and elsewhere. His mother, 'an illiterate village woman', Gandhi said, had taught him that the atom reflected the universe; if he took care of his immediate surroundings the universe would take care of itself.

Nehru telegraphed Gandhi to come back to Delhi. The Congress Working Committee was convening on May 1st for a great historic decision. Gandhi made the five-hundred-mile trip by hot train.

Mountbatten had been extremely active, visiting provinces, talking to leaders, steeping himself in the problem of India's future. As his thoughts crystallized he saw no escape from Pakistan.

Mountbatten accordingly put the question to the Congress party: Would they accept the partition of India? Nehru had already told a United Provinces Political Conference on April 21st that 'The Moslem League can have Pakistan if they wish to have it, but on condition that they do not take away other parts of India which do not wish to join Pakistan.'

Would the Working Committee take the same stand?

Gandhi was opposed to it. Patel wavered; he would have put Jinnah's threats to the test of force. He would have used the central government to suppress Moslem violence. But in the end he too acquiesced. 'I agreed to partition as a last resort when we reached a stage when we

would have lost all,' he revealed two and a half years later. Rather than risk a civil war or the loss of independence, Congress was reconciled to Pakistan.

Pakistan was the high price they paid for freedom.

Gandhi made no secret of his chagrin. 'The Congress', he told his prayer meeting in the untouchables' colony in Delhi on May 7th, 'has accepted Pakistan and demanded the division of the Punjab and Bengal. I am opposed to any division of India now as I always have been. But what can I do? The only thing I can do is to dissociate myself from such a scheme. Nobody can force me to accept it except God.'

Gandhi went to see Mountbatten. His advice to the British was to leave with their troops and 'take the risk of leaving India to chaos or anarchy'. If the British left India, Gandhi explained, there might be chaos for a while; 'We would still go through the fire no doubt but that fire would purify us.'

Mountbatten's mind was too precise and military to build the future on a chance. Yet not only do most individuals do exactly that; in a war, nations often gamble with their lives. Every battle is a 'calculated risk' in which the calculation is quite theoretical. To Gandhi, the division of India was an absolute evil, as evil as Britain's submission to Hitler would have been in 1940, and rather than resign himself to it he would have accepted all the possible material losses.

This, however, was only the abstract aspect of Gandhi's suggestion. In concrete form, its simplicity concealed its astuteness. The British could not abandon India without a government. Gandhi's advice to England to leave India to chaos meant give India to Congress. If England refused, Gandhi wanted Congress to leave the Government. The burden of maintaining peace in the country would

then have rested solely on the British, who sought no such responsibility.

The choice that Gandhi put to the British therefore was: Let Congress rule India or rule it yourself in these troubled times.

Gandhi saw that no Pakistan was possible unless the British created it, and the British would not create Pakistan until Congress accepted it; they could not split India and antagonize the majority in order to placate Jinnah and the minority. Therefore Congress should not accept it.

Nobody listened to Gandhi. 'Our leaders were tired and shortsighted,' writes an intimate collaborator of Gandhi. The Congress leaders were afraid to delay independence. Gandhi would have delayed it in the hope of ultimately winning freedom for a united country instead of independence for two hostile Indias.

In the summer of 1948, I asked Nehru, Patel and others in India why Gandhi had not attempted to prevent Congress from accepting Pakistan; if nothing less had availed he might have coerced them by fasting.

It was not Gandhi's way, their composite reply ran, to compel agreement even on the most crucial issue. That is true, but the complete answer goes deeper. Congress acquiesced in Pakistan and stayed in the Government. The only alternative would have been to reject Pakistan, leave the Government and stake everything on a restoration of the people's sanity and peaceful inclinations. But Gandhi saw that the leaders had no faith in this alternative. He might have induced them to vote for his view in committee; he could not have infused them with faith in it except by proving that Hindus and Moslems could live together amicably. The burden of proof was on Gandhi. And time was running out fast.

Gandhi hurried across the continent to Calcutta. To get Pakistan, Bengal would have to be partitioned between Pakistan and Hindustan. If he could impress the Bengal Moslems with the painful results of such vivisection and if he could check the rising Hindu sentiment for the division of Bengal, he might prevent Pakistan.

'When everything goes wrong at the top,' Gandhi asked in Calcutta, 'can the goodness of the people at the bottom assert itself against the mischievous influence?' This was his hope.

Bengal has one culture, one language, he argued. Let it stay united. They had reunited Bengal after Lord Curzon partitioned it; could they not rebuff Jinnah before he partitioned it?

After six days in Calcutta, Gandhi went to Bihar. Despite the torrid heat, he travelled to the villages. His refrain was the same: 'If the Hindus showed the spirit of brotherliness, it would be good for Bihar, for India and for the world.'

On May 25th, in response to a summons from Nehru, Gandhi again returned to New Delhi. Mountbatten, his mind made up, had flown to London. Rumour had it that India would be partitioned, that the plan would be announced soon. But why, Gandhi wondered. The Cabinet Mission had rejected partition and Pakistan on May 16th, 1946. What had happened since then to alter the situation? The riots? Were they yielding to hooliganism? 'I must cling to the hope,' Gandhi said, 'that Britain will not depart a hair's breadth from the spirit and letter of the Cabinet Mission's statement of May 16th of last year....'

'He is burning the candle at both ends,' Dr. Sushila Nayyar reported. He was still striving to reverse the tide towards partition. If the effort killed him what did it matter? 'In the India that is shaping today there is no

place for me,' he said; his voice shook with emotion. 'I have given up the hope of living 125 years. I may last a year or two. That is a different matter. But I have no wish to live if India is to be submerged in a deluge of violence as it is threatening to do.'

Yet he could not be a pessimist for long. Nehru brought Dr. Lo Chia-luen, the Chinese Ambassador, to Gandhi's untouchable hut. 'How do you think things will shape themselves?'' Dr. Lo asked.

'I am an irrepressible optimist,' Gandhi said. 'We have not lived and toiled all these years that we should become barbarians as we appear to be becoming, looking at all the senseless bloodshed in Bengal, Bihar and the Punjab. But I feel that it is just an indication that, as we are throwing off the foreign yoke, all the dirt and froth is coming to the surface. When the Ganges is in flood, the water is turbid; the dirt comes to the surface. When the flood subsides, you see the clear, blue water which soothes the eye. That is what I hope for and live for. I do not wish to see Indian humanity becoming barbarian.'

Mountbatten, meantime, had been working in London on a plan to divide India.

The Mountbatten plan provided for the division not only of India but of Bengal, the Punjab and Assam if their people wished. In the case of Bengal and the Punjab, the recently elected provincial legislatures would decide. If Bengal voted to partition itself, then the Moslem-majority district of Sylhet in Assam would determine by popular referendum whether to join the Moslem part of Bengal.

'Nor is there anything in this plan', the text read, 'to preclude negotiations between communities for a united India.'

The scheme was thus permissive and involved no legal compulsion by Britain. Bengal and the Punjab might vote

to remain united, in which case there would be no partition and no Pakistan. But even if Pakistan came into being, it and the other India could subsequently unite.

Before leaving England, Mountbatten saw Churchill who promised to support the plan in the House of Commons.

On June 2nd, 1947, Herbert L. Matthews, telegraphing to the *New York Times* on the eve of the announcement of the plan, said, 'Mr. Gandhi is a very real worry, since if he decides to go on a "fast unto death" it would well wreck the whole plan.'

The next day, Prime Minister Attlee announced the plan in the House of Commons and Mountbatten revealed it on the New Delhi radio. In his broadcast, the last Viceroy said frankly, 'I am, of course, just as much opposed to the partition of provinces as I am to the partition of India herself.' The plan, he knew, was imperfect, especially because of its effect on the five million fighting Sikhs of the Punjab. Any conceivable line through that province would leave some Sikhs in Pakistan against their wishes.

Nehru, Patel and the Working Committee had approved the plan; their approval became official when the All-India Congress Committee, sitting in New Delhi, on June 15th voted 153 for the plan, 29 against, with some abstentions.

After the resolution had been adopted, Professor J. B. Kripalani, the president of Congress, delivered a brief speech which explained why Congress had abandoned Gandhi.

The Hindu and Moslem 'communities', Kripalani said, 'have vied with each other in the worst orgies of violence . . . I have seen a well where women with their children, 107 in all, threw themselves to save their honour. In another place, a place of worship, fifty young women were killed by their menfolk for the same reason . . . These ghastly experiences have no doubt affected my approach to the ques-

tion. Some members have accused us that we have taken this decision out of fear. I must admit the truth of this charge, but not in the sense in which it is made. The fear is not for the lives lost or of the widows' wail or the orphans' cry or of the many houses burned. The fear is that if we go on like this, retaliating and heaping indignities on each other, we shall progressively reduce ourselves to a state of cannibalism and worse. In every fresh communal fight the most brutal and degraded acts of the previous fight become the norm.' This is the cruel truth of all violence.

'I have been with Gandhiji for the last thirty years,' Kripalani continued. 'I joined him in Champaran. I have never swayed in my loyalty to him. It is not a personal but a political loyalty. Even when I have differed with him I have considered his political instinct to be more correct than my elaborately reasoned attitudes. Today also I feel that he with his supreme fearlessness is correct and my stand defective.

'Why then am I not with him? It is because I feel that he has as-yet found no way of tackling the problem on a mass basis.' The nation was not responding to Gandhi's plea for peace and brotherhood.

Gandhi knew this. 'If only non-Moslem India were with me,' he declared, 'I could show the way to undo the proposed partition . . . Many have invited me to head the opposition. But there is nothing in common between them and me except the opposition . . . Can love and hate combine?'

Ninety-five per cent. of Gandhi's mail was abusive and hateful. The Hindu letters asked why he was partial to Moslems and the Moslem letters demanded that he stop obstructing the creation of Pakistan.

A Marathi couple from the Tilak country came up to Delhi, camped near the untouchables' quarter and an-

nounced to Gandhi that they had begun a fast which would last until Pakistan was abandoned. He addressed them at two successive prayer meetings. Are you fasting against Pakistan, he asked, because you hate Moslems or love Moslems? If you hate Moslems you may not fast. If you love Moslems, you should go and teach other Hindus to love them. The young couple abandoned the fast.

The Hindus did not love Moslems enough and the Moslems did not love Hindus enough. India would therefore be divided between them.

Gandhi considered partition 'a spiritual tragedy'. He noted preparations for bloody strife. He saw the possibility of a 'military dictatorship' and then 'goodbye to freedom'. 'I do not agree with what my closest friends have done or are doing,' he said.

Thirty-two years of work, Gandhi stated, have come to 'an inglorious end'. On August 15th, 1947 India would become independent. But the victory was a cold, political arrangement: Indians would sit where Englishmen had sat; a Tricolour would wave in place of the Union Jack. That was the hollow husk of freedom. It was victory with tragedy, victory that found the army defeating its own general.

'I cannot participate in the celebrations of August 15th,' Gandhi announced.

Independence brought sadness to the architect of independence. The Father of his Country was disappointed with his country. 'I deceived myself into the belief that people were wedded to non-violence . . .' he said. Indians had betrayed non-violence which was more important to him than Indian independence.

Mountbatten told the Royal Empire Society on October 6th, 1948, that in India Gandhi 'was not compared with some great statesman like Roosevelt or Churchill. They classified him simply in their minds with Mohammed and

with Christ'. Millions adored the Mahatma, multitudes tried to kiss his feet or the dust of his footsteps. They paid him homage and rejected his teachings. They held his person holy and desecrated his personality. They glorified the shell and trampled the essence. They believed in him but not in his principles.

Independence Day, August 15th, found Gandhi in Calcutta fighting riots. He fasted all day and prayed. He issued no message to the nation. Invited to the capital to participate in the formal inauguration of the nation's life, he refused to attend. 'There is disturbance within,' he wrote to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur the next day. In the midst of festivities, he was sad. 'Is there something wrong with me,' he asked, 'or are things really going wrong?'

Freedom had come to India and Gandhi was perplexed and perturbed; his *Gita* detachment was impaired. 'I am far away from the condition of equipoise,' he declared.

But faith never left him, nor did he contemplate retiring to a cave or a wood. 'No cause that is intrinsically just can ever be described as forlorn,' he asserted.

'You must not lose faith in humanity,' he wrote Amrit Kaur on August 29th. 'Humanity is an ocean. If a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty.'

He had kept his faith in man. He had kept his faith in God. He had kept therefore his faith in himself. 'I am a born fighter who does not know failure,' he assured a prayer-meeting audience.

Partition was a fact, but 'it is always possible by correct conduct to lessen an evil and eventually even to bring good out of evil', Gandhi said.

He still hoped his faith would move people, but how? 'I am groping today,' he declared. He was full of 'searching questions' about himself. 'Have I led the country astray?'

A lesser man might have sulked or grown bitter or plotted the discomfiture of those who thwarted him. Gandhi turned the searchlight inward; perhaps it was his fault.

'I can echo your prayer that I may realize peace and find myself,' he wrote in a letter to Kurshed Naoroji. 'It is a difficult task but I am after it.'

'O Lord,' he exclaimed, 'Lead us from darkness into light.'

He was approaching his seventy-eighth birthday. The world he had built lay partly in ruins all around him. He must begin building anew. Congress was too much a political party; it must become an instrument for the constructive uplift of the people. He wrote two articles in *Harijan* on the virtues of non-violent, non-revolutionary, God-loving, equalitarian Socialism. He was seeking new directions. He was old in body and young in spirit, old in experience and young in faith. Future plans lifted past troubles from his back.

He had gone to Calcutta and been taken into a Moslem house in an area where the stones were slippery with fresh blood and the air acrid with the smoke of burning homes. The Moslem family to whom the house belonged were friendly to him. 'For the moment I am no enemy,' he wrote Amrit Kaur. He rejoiced more in the smallest triumph of brotherhood than in the political independence of a country.

The bereaved came to him in the lowly house and he wiped their tears. He found solace in the balm he gave others. He had discovered his new task. It was his old task: to assuage pain, to spread love, to make all men brothers.

St. Francis of Assisi, hoeing his garden, was asked what he would do if he were suddenly to learn that he was to die at sunset that day.

He said: 'I would finish hoeing my garden.'

Gandhi continued to hoe the garden in which he had worked all his days. Sinners had thrown stones and filth into the garden. He continued to hoe.

Pertinacity was Gandhi's antidote to frustration and tragedy. Action gave him inner peace.

CHAPTER XVIII

GANDHI HOES HIS GARDEN

THE British had left India. Politically literate, they had read the handwriting on the Indian wall: 'Your day is done.' The handwriting was Gandhi's.

By the will of Indians, Lord Mountbatten remained as Governor-General of the Indian Union. It had been agreed that Mountbatten would also be Governor-General of Pakistan and thus a symbol of unity. But Jinnah substituted himself.

Pakistan bisected India. Pakistan itself was bisected. It counted 38,000,000 inhabitants in north-west India and 45,000,000 in north-east India. Between the two parts lay nearly 800 miles of the Indian Union.

In Moslem Pakistan there were many million Hindus and Sikhs. Of the 330,000,000 residents of the Indian Union, some 42,000,000 were Moslems.

Five hundred and fifty of the 565 native states quietly acceded to the Indian Union. Three joined Pakistan. Most of the maharajas and nawabs became overpaid pensioned puppets. Elephants went begging.

The frontier that divided India in two divided families in two; it separated factories from raw materials, crops from markets. The army was divided; the treasury was to be divided. The non-Moslems of Pakistan were worried

about their future. The Moslems of the Indian Union were anxious. In each of the new Dominions, fighting broke out between ruling majority and frightened minority.

One India could have lived in peace. Vivisection sundered vital arteries; out of them flowed human blood and the poison of religious hate.

Calcutta and the western part of Bengal province remained in the Indian Union. Eastern Bengal went to Pakistan. Twenty-three per cent. of the population of Calcutta was Moslem. The Hindus and Moslems fought.

How does a religious riot commence? On April 17th, 1938, three Hindus and a Moslem were sitting on their haunches in the Northbrook Gardens in Bombay and playing cards. They had been drinking. They quarrelled over the game. 'Rumours of a Hindu-Moslem disturbance', reads an official report, 'spread in the city resulting in panic which was taken advantage of by hooligans and stray assaults, stabbing and stone-throwing commenced... Orders were issued prohibiting the carrying of lethal weapons and prescribing the routes for Hindu and Moslem funeral processions. Troops were also asked to stand by... A clash that threatened to assume serious proportions was soon brought under control. Sporadic assaults, however, continued for a few days and altogether there were fourteen deaths and injuries to ninety-eight persons.' The police arrested 2488 persons.

That was in the quiet, normal, pre-Pakistan days of 1938. With tension at its peak in 1947, especially in a city like Calcutta where the inhabitants are squeezed together herring-barrel fashion in filthy slums, a little Moslem girl pulling a Hindu girl's hair or a Hindu boy calling a Moslem boy names might precipitate a mortal riot. Passion and poverty converted men into tinder.

On this inflammable material, Gandhi undertook to sprinkle the sweet waters of peace.

Gandhi had arrived in Calcutta on August 9th, 1947. For an entire year, ever since Jinnah's Direct Action Day on August 16th, 1946, Calcutta had been torn by bloody strife. Gandhi and H. S. Suhrawardy, the former prime minister of Bengal, walked arm in arm through streets tense with religious frenzy. Suhrawardy drove a car with Gandhi as his passenger through riotous areas. Violence seemed to melt away wherever they passed. Thousands of Moslems and Hindus embraced one another shouting 'Long Live Mahatma Gandhi', 'Long Live Hindu-Moslem unity'. Huge crowds fraternized at Gandhi's daily prayer meetings. After August 14th no disturbances were reported in Calcutta. Gandhi had calmed the storm. The press paid tributes to the magician in loincloth.

On the night of August 31st Gandhi had gone to bed in the Moslem house. At about 10 o'clock he heard angry noises. He lay still. Suhrawardy and several female disciples of the Mahatma could be heard attempting to pacify some intruders. Then glass crashed; window panes had been broken with stones and fists. A number of young men entered the house and commenced kicking in doors. Gandhi got out of bed and opened the door of his room. He was face to face with enraged rioters. He touched his palms together in greeting. A brick was thrown at him. It hit a Moslem friend standing by his side. One of the rioters swung a lathi stick which narrowly missed Gandhi's head. The Mahatma shook his head sorrowfully. The police arrived; the police chief appealed to Gandhi to retire to his room. Then the officers hustled the intruders out of the house. Outside, tear gas was used to disperse an unruly mob of Moslems infuriated by the presence of a band-

aged Moslém who, they alleged, had been stabbed by Hindus.

Gandhi decided to fast.

In a statement to the press on September 1st, he said, 'To put in an appearance before a yelling crowd does not always work. It certainly did not last night. What my word in person cannot do, my fast may. It may touch the hearts of all the warring factions in the Punjab if it does in Calcutta. I therefore begin fasting from 8.15 tonight to end only if and when sanity returns to Calcutta'.

It was a fast unto death. Unless sanity returned, the Mahatma would die.

September 2nd, groups and delegations commenced streaming to Gandhi's residence. They would do anything to save his life, they said. That was the wrong approach, he explained. His fasts were 'intended to stir the conscience and remove mental sluggishness'. Saving his life must be incidental to a change of heart.

Leaders of all communities and many organizations called on the Mahatma. He received them all and talked with them. He would not desist from the fast until communal harmony had been restored. Prominent Moslems and an official of the Pakistan Seamen's Union visited Gandhi and assured him they would work to keep the peace. More Moslems came. The fast impressed them; it was for their safety and for the rehabilitation of their destroyed homes.

On September 4th, municipal officials reported to Gandhi that the city had been absolutely quiet for twenty-four hours. They also told him that as proof of their wish for communal peace 500 policemen of North Calcutta, including the British police officers, had commenced a twenty-four-hour sympathy fast while remaining on duty. The leaders of hooligan bands, burly ruffians, came and sat at

Gandhi's bedside and wept and promised to refrain from their usual depredations. Hindu, Moslem and Christian representatives, workers, merchants and shopkeepers gave a pledge in Gandhi's presence that there would be no more trouble in Calcutta. He believed them, he said, but this time he wanted a written promise. And before they signed the promise they must know this: if the promise was broken he would commence 'an irrevocable fast' which nothing on earth could stop until he died.

The city leaders withdrew to deliberate. It was a serious moment and they were conscious of the responsibility. They nevertheless drafted and signed the pledge. At 9-15 p.m. on September 4th, Gandhi drank a glass of sweet lime juice which Suhrawardy handed him. He had fasted seventy-three hours.

From that day, through the many months when the Punjab and other provinces shook with religious massacres, Calcutta and both parts of Bengal remained riot-free. Bengal remained true to its plighted word.

On September 7th, Gandhi left Calcutta for New Delhi en route to the Punjab. Another part of the garden needed hoeing.

At the station Gandhi was met by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and others. Gloom covered their faces. Riots were raging through Delhi. Sikh and Hindu refugees from the fires of the Punjab were flooding the city. They had occupied the untouchables' colony where the Mahatma used to stay. He would have to live in the 'palatial Birla House', as Gandhi called it.

Gandhi's room in Birla House was on the ground floor, about a foot above the earth. It was approximately 25 feet by 16 feet in area and some 10 feet high. A bathroom adjoined it. When Gandhi arrived he had all the furniture removed. Visitors sat on the floor and he slept on the

terrace outside the room. An electric heater and electric lamp were available for use. The room was where the prayer meetings were held on the right side of the house and furthest from the area of the Birla grounds. To go to prayers Gandhi would step down to the earth through a high window and then walk under a long row of red sandstone pergolas covered with luxurious vines.

On arriving at the house Gandhi learned that no fresh fruit or vegetables were available; vital services had been disrupted by the riots in Delhi which, he said, resembled a 'city of the dead'.

With passion and without restraint, Gandhi now gave himself to the task of bringing Delhi to its senses—it and the Punjab. Nothing else mattered. In former years, he had permitted doctors to measure his blood pressure. Now he said, 'Leave me alone. I must work and do not want to know about my blood pressure'. His circulatory system, the physicians said, had not deteriorated in ten years, nor did he have more wrinkles on his face or body. A cataract discovered in 1939 by an eye specialist had not progressed. His ears had become very sensitive to loud noises. He slept five to six hours every night and half an hour to an hour during the day; he always slept soundly and rarely talked in his sleep. On one occasion, he made arm motions during his sleep and when he woke, Dr. Nayyar asked him what had happened and he said he had dreamt he was scaling a wall. He was always fresh and keen in the morning.

Despite acute distress over the political situation, Gandhi continued to take excellent care of his body. He enjoyed lying for ten to twenty minutes in a very hot bath at a temperature of 100 or 101 Fahrenheit. Sometimes it made him giddy. If a shower-bath was available he finished with a cold one.

In these months of hard travel and tremendous mental pressure, he ate less. His formula was: Under-eat when overworked. There was much work to be done.

The very first day in Birla House Gandhi visited Dr. Zakir Hussain at Okla, a village fourteen miles outside New Delhi.

Zakir Hussain, a stately scholar with a noble head and character, presided over the Jamia Millia Islamia, a Moslem religious academy at Okla. Gandhi had collected money for the school. He had also appointed Dr. Zakir Hussain chairman of the national society for basic education; he did it at a conference where everybody except Hussain had accepted Gandhi's ideas on training for children.

The Okla academy, a collection of small, new, clean-looking buildings, lies in a region redolent with Moslem tradition and rich in ruins of ancient Mogul forts and mosques. But in August 1947 it found itself engulfed in a sea of angry Hindus and Sikhs to whom everything Moslem, whether man or building, was hateful. At night the teachers and students of the academy stood guard, expecting an assault. All lights were out. In a circle around them they could see Moslem villages in flames and Moslem homes burning like torches. Near by is the Jumna River. Night after night they could hear Moslems jumping into the river to escape their pursuers. But the pursuers would jump in after them and then there was a scuffle and splash and the victim would be held down till he drowned or gave one last anguished scream as the knife cut his throat. Nearer and nearer the ring of attackers came. One dark night a taxicab arrived at the Jamia Millia grounds; out of it stepped Jawaharlal Nehru. He had driven alone through the belt of madmen that circled

Delhi in order to stay with Dr. Hussain and his students and protect them if harm came.

The moment Gandhi heard of the danger that threatened the Moslem academy he went out in a car and spent an hour with Zakir Hussain and talked with the teachers and the boys. His presence hallowed the academy; after that it was safe.

The same day Gandhi visited several refugee camps; he was urged to go with an armed guard; the Hindus and Sikhs might attack him as pro-Moslem and the Moslems might attack him as a Hindu and anybody crazed by deaths or abductions in the family might attack him without reason. He went without escort.

Throwing caution and health considerations to the wind, Gandhi now developed inordinate energy, criss-crossing the city many times each day to tour riotous areas, visit refugee camps in and outside the city and speak several times a day to thousands of embittered, uprooted specimens of humanity. 'I think of the poor refugee in Delhi, in both East Punjab [Indian Union] and West Punjab [Pakistan] today while it is raining, he told his prayer meeting on September 20th. 'I have heard that a convoy of Hindus and Sikhs fifty-seven miles long is pouring into the Indian Union from West Punjab,' he said. 'It makes my brain reel to think how this can be. Such a happening is unparalleled in the history of the world and it makes me, as it should make you, hang my head in shame.'

Gandhi was not exaggerating; the fifty-seven-mile long convoy was one of several in the Great Migration in which at least 15,000,000 people trekked hundreds of miles not to new homes and opportunities but to homelessness, sometimes to death and disease. Out of the part of the Punjab assigned to Pakistan, moving in the general direction of New Delhi, came millions of Hindus and Sikhs fleeing the

knives and clubs of Moslems. Out of the Indian Union, moving towards Pakistan, came millions of Moslems fearing the daggers and lathis of Hindus and Sikhs. Police protection had become a thing of the past. Police and even military were animated by the same passions as the aggressors and often helped them to loot and kill.

A few tired policemen and groups of young volunteers were all that distinguished the 'convoys' from disorganized flights of panicked people. They fled in their bullock carts or, if they had never owned a cart or it was taken from them, they fled on foot, whole families, adults carrying children, carrying the sick in baskets, carrying the aged on their shoulders. Frequently the sick were abondoned and left to die on the dusty road. Cholera, smallpox and other diseases scourged the migrant hordes. For days and weeks the convoys crawled forward leaving corpses behind to mark their route. Vultures hovered over the line of march waiting for weary wanderers to drop to the ground. Few families had salvaged enough food to support health. If they did it was stolen or fought for; the losers starved, the victors existed a little longer. Sometimes hostile convoys, advancing in opposite directions, camped during the night in the vicinity of one another and continued their senseless vendetta.

The Nehru government set up camps outside Delhi to catch the migrants before they entered the city and care for them. But endless thousands escaped the cordons. They took what they could seize in the town. They slept in doorways and courtyards, on pavements, in gutters, on streets. They lay on the asphalt, exhausted. Unheeding drivers might run over them.

The Delhi home of a Moslem gone to Pakistan was considered legitimate booty; the refugees occupied it. Moslem

stores were looted. Where Moslems resisted, riots occurred. Reduced to primitive living, the displaced persons yielded to primitive passions.

In this city of the dead and the mad, Mahatma Gandhi tried to spread the gospel of love and peace. Moslems must remain even if they were molested, he said; 'the Hindus and Sikhs who molested them discredited their religion and did irreparable harm to India'. He urged holders of unlicensed arms to surrender them to him; 'driblets have been coming to me voluntarily'.

'I must be pardoned for putting first blame on the Hindus and Sikhs,' he told a prayer audience consisting chiefly of Hindus and Sikhs. 'I will not rest till every Moslem in the Indian Union who wishes to be a loyal citizen of the Union is back in his home living in peace and security and until the Hindus and Sikhs have returned to their homes.' But the Hindus and Sikhs were afraid to return to Pakistan, nor did they wish to relinquish the homes of Moslems, who had fled to Pakistan and whom Gandhi was inviting to return.

Gandhi had planted himself, alone, athwart a raging torrent.

He went to a meeting of about five hundred members of the Rashtriya Sevak Sangha or R.S.S., a highly disciplined organization of young militant Hindus. They were fiercely anti-Moslem, and many of them were fiercely opposed to him because he tried to protect Moslems. But he told them that they would kill Hinduism by their intolerance. If Pakistan was maltreating Hindus that was no justification for their maltreating Moslems. 'There is no gain in returning evil for evil.' He was indeed a friend of the Moslems, but also a friend of the Sikhs and Hindus. 'Both sides appear to have gone crazy. The result can be nothing but destruction and misery' for both sides. The

R.S.S., Gandhi said, was 'a well-organized, well-disciplined body. Its strength could be used in the interests of India or against it'. Allegations had been made against the R.S.S., Gandhi declared; it had been accused of fomenting riots and planning assassinations. 'It is for you to show by your uniform behaviour that the allegations are baseless.'

After his speech, Gandhi invited questions. One question and answer was recorded.

'Does Hinduism permit killing an evil-doer?'

'One evil-doer cannot punish another,' Gandhi replied. 'To punish is the function of the Government, not of the public.'

October 2nd, 1947, was the Mahatma's seventy-eighth birthday. Lady Mountbatten and foreign diplomats came to congratulate him; sheaves of telegrams were delivered from abroad and all parts of India. Many Moslems sent greetings. The rich sent money. Refugees sent flowers. 'Where do congratulations come in?' Gandhi asked. 'Would it not be more appropriate to send condolences? There is nothing but anguish in my heart. Time was whatever I said the masses followed. Today, mine is a lone voice . . . I have lost all desire to live long, let alone 125 years . . . I cannot live while hatred and killing mar the atmosphere . . . I therefore plead with you to give up the present madness.'

He did not feel depressed; he felt helpless. 'I invoke the aid of the all-embracing Power to take me away from this "vale of tears" rather than make me a helpless witness of the butchery by man become savage . . . If He wants me He will keep me on earth yet awhile.'

He visited refugee camps that were filthy. Refugees who were not untouchables refused to clean. He chastised that weakness in Hindus. Cold weather was approaching.

He appealed for blankets, quilts and cotton sheets for the homeless.

The Punjab is the granary of India. The turmoil in it had stamped the harvest into the dust and the Indian Union was feeling greater hunger than usual. Gandhi nevertheless opposed rationing because it entailed centralization, red tape, speculation and corruption.

Each evening he announced how many blankets he had received. Blankets were better than quilts because quilts got wet with dew. But quilts, he said, could be covered with old newspapers at night.

Gandhi hoped to leave for the Punjab. But Delhi was not at peace. A Moslem shopkeeper, thinking that things had settled down, opened the shutters of his shop. The same instant, a bullet killed him.

One evening Gandhi went to the Delhi Central Jail and conducted a prayer service for three thousand prisoners. 'I am a seasoned ex-prisoner myself,' he told them with a laugh.

'What should jails be like in free India?' he asked. 'All criminals should be treated as patients and the jails should be hospitals admitting this kind of patients for treatment and cure.' He closed by expressing the wish that Hindu, Moslem and Sikh prisoners live together in fraternity.

The news from Calcutta was good. Why, he asked his prayer meeting at Birla House, could Delhi not follow the peaceful example of Calcutta?

Each evening Gandhi asked his prayer congregation whether anybody objected to the reading of some verses from the *Koran*. Usually there were two or three objectors. Then he asked whether the other worshippers would harbour any ill feeling for the objectors. They said they would not. Would the objectors remain quiet during the *Koran*

readings? They would. He read the verses. This was a lesson in tolerance and discipline. He did not expect all to agree. He expected all to remain non-violent despite disagreements.

With the refugees came harrowing tales of savagery. A man swung an infant by its foot and bashed its head against a wall. Two men took a child by the feet and tore its body in two down the middle. A Moslem mob laid siege to a village; after long resistance, the Hindu and Sikh men came out and surrendered; the women had huddled inside the stockade which enclosed the village well. The Moslems were coming to fetch them; a woman jumped into the well; another woman jumped after her; in the next four minutes, seventy-three women had drowned themselves on top of one another in the well.

These memories bred new atrocities. Assume that some Moslems had killed Hindus because they were Hindus and that most Moslems condoned those killings. To hate, suspect and wish to hurt all Moslems because they were Moslems made the Hindus as immoral as the Moslems. (The argument could also be applied to Hindu killings of Moslems.) Moreover, if Hindus sought to justify their actions by proving that the Moslems had commenced the atrocities it merely meant that the Hindus had allowed themselves to become as evil as the Moslems whom they abominated because of that evil; they had been conquered by the spirit of their tormentors.

Fearing retaliation, Moslems in the Indian Union decided to escape to Pakistan. Fearing reprisals, the Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan were trekking to the Indian Union. A vast region was churning with hate, murder and migrating millions. In the midst of the upheaval stood the little man in the loincloth. A reprisal for a reprisal, a death for a death, he was saying, means death for India.

Lady Mountbatten visited a refugee camp; she brought Gandhi a message; the refugees wanted to see him. Similar messages arrived from other camps, Hindu camps and Moslems camps. He went as often as he could. Two hundred thousand displaced persons were packed into Kurukshetra Camp in east Punjab and more were pouring in each day from west Punjab. Gandhi had a session of the Congress Working Committee to attend so he addressed the camp by radio on November 12th, 1947: 'I can serve you best by drawing attention to your shortcomings. That has been my life's motto, for therein lies true friendship and my service is not only to you or to India; it extends to the world, for I know no barriers of race or creed. If you can get rid of your failings, you will benefit not only yourself but the whole of India.

'It hurts me to know that so many of you are without shelter. This is a real hardship particularly in the cold weather . . . You must help in the maintenance of discipline . . . You must take the sanitation of the place in your hands. I ask you . . . everyone of you, men, women and children to keep Kurukshetra clean . . . share your rations, be content with what you get . . . You must live for others and not only for yourselves. Idleness is demoralizing.' He urged them to spin.

Sporadic violence in Delhi continued. In the early disturbances 137 mosques had been damaged; some had been converted into Hindu temples with idols. Gandhi considered 'such desecration a blot on Hinduism and Sikhism'. He went to a Sikh celebration attended by 100,000 bearded Sikhs and their families. He condemned their violence against Moslems. Sikhs, he said, had been drinking and rioting. 'Keep your hearts clean and you will find that all other communities will follow you.'

Gandhi also criticized the Indian government. 'Our

statesmen', he wrote in a letter to Madame Edmond Privat, 'have for over two generations declaimed against the heavy expenditures on armaments under the British regime, but now that freedom from political serfdom has come, our military expenditure has increased and still threatens to increase and of this we are proud. There is not a voice raised against it in our legislative chambers.' He called it 'mad imitation of the tinsel of the West'. But he still hoped that India would 'survive this death dance' and 'occupy the moral height that should belong to her after the training, however imperfect, in non-violence for an unbroken period of thirty-two years since 1915'.

'When it is relevant,' Gandhi wrote, 'truth has to be uttered, however unpleasant it may be . . . Misdeeds of the Hindus in the Indian Union have to be proclaimed by the Hindus from the house-top if those of the Moslems in Pakistan are to be arrested or stopped.' As a Hindu he was sternest with Hindus.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FUTURE OF INDIA

GANDHI seldom made an adverse criticism without suggesting a concrete cure. He had criticized the Congress party and the new government of independent India. What did he propose?

Gandhi was quick to see that the freedom of India raised the question of freedom in India. How could India remain a democracy?

There was only one major party, the Congress party, and it enjoyed vast prestige as the party of Gandhi, Nehru and Patel, the party which had fought and won

the battle for liberation from Britain. Other parties like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Communists were insignificant.

The question Gandhi pondered was: Could the Congress party guide and curb the Government? He had not studied political conditions in the Soviet Union or Franco Spain or other totalitarian countries, but by intuition he arrived at conclusions which others had reached after long experience and analysis: he realized that a one-party system could actually be a no-party system, for when the Government and party are one, the party is a rubber stamp and leads only a fictitious existence.

If the one important party of India, the Congress, did not maintain an independent, critical attitude towards the Government, who could act as a brake on any autocratic tendencies that might develop in the Government?

Without free criticism and potent opposition, democracy dies.

Without political criticism and opposition, a nation's intellect, culture and public morality stagnate; big men are purged and small men become kotowing pygmies. The leaders surround themselves with cowards, sycophants and grovelling yes-men whose automatic approval is misread as a tribute to greatness.

Could the Congress party, with aid from Gandhi and from the free press, prevent such a development in India?

On November 15th, 1947, in the presence of Gandhi, Professor J. B. Kripalani, president of Congress, informed the All-India Congress Committee that he was resigning his position. He had not been consulted by the Government nor been taken into its full confidence. Although 'it is the party from which the government of the day derives its power', Kripalani said, the Government ignored the party.

Gandhi, Kripalani revealed, felt that in these circumstances the resignation was justified.

Nehru and Patel were the heads of the Government. They were also leaders of the Congress party. Their popularity and hold on the Congress machine enabled them to dominate the party. They identified themselves with the party. Why then should they accept the Congress president as a curb on their power? Why should they give him a veto on their proposals?

The choice of a successor to Kripalani assumed key importance. The election of a puppet who obeyed the Government would signalize the elimination of effective political opposition.

Gandhi attended the meeting of the Congress Working Committee which was to elect the new president. It was Mahatma's day of silence. When nominations were opened, he wrote the name of his candidate on a small piece of paper and passed it to Nehru. Nehru read the name aloud: Narendra Dev, the Socialist leader. Nehru supported Narendra Dev's candidature. Others opposed it.

The Socialists were then still inside the Congress party. But their ideological, political and personal differences with right-wing Congressmen presumably encouraged Gandhi in the belief that they might be able to control and check certain trends within the Government.

The morning session of the Working Committee closed at 10 a.m.; no vote was taken.

At noon, Nehru and Patel summoned Rajendra Prasad and, without consulting Gandhi, urged him to be a candidate for the presidency of Congress. Dr. Prasad, a member of the Working Committee, was a lawyer who first met Gandhi in Champaran in 1917 during the struggle for the indigo sharecroppers.

Prasad went to Gandhi in Birla House at 1 p.m. and told

the Mahatma about the offer. 'I don't like it,' Gandhi said.

'I cannot remember ever having dared to oppose Gandhi,' Dr. Prasad stated in recounting these events. 'Even when I differed with him I felt he must be right and followed him.'

On this occasion, too, Prasad agreed with Gandhi and promised to withdraw his candidacy.

Subsequently, however, Prasad was persuaded to change his mind. He became the new Congress president. He was a gentle, modest, compliant, retiring, well-intentioned, high-minded person more inclined to serve than to lead. He was sixty-three.

Gandhi had been defeated by the Congress machine and by the key men in the Government.

Gandhi now tried a different approach.

During the first half of December 1947 he held a series of conferences with his most trusted collaborators outside the Government. They were the Constructive Workers, the men and women who directed the several organizations set up by Gandhi over the years to remove untouchability, spread the use of Hindustani as the national language, extend basic education, improve food cultivation, develop village industries and encourage hand spinning. The Constructive Workers were devoted to non-violence; they believed in Gandhi not merely because he was the chief instrument of India's political independence but because they considered him the chief agent for India's social reform.

Gandhi wanted all these organizations to combine. But he did not want the Constructive Workers 'to go into power politics; it would spell ruin. Or else why,' Gandhi asked, 'should not I myself have gone into politics and tried to run the Government my way? Those who are holding the

reins of power today would easily have stepped aside and made room for me, but whilst they are in charge they carry on only according to their own lights.

'But I do not want to take power into my hands,' Gandhi assured his friends. 'By abjuring power and devoting ourselves to pure, selfless service of the voters we can guide and influence them. It would give us far more real power than we shall have by going into the government. A stage may come when the people themselves may feel and say that they want us and no one else to wield power. The question could then be considered. I shall most probably not be alive then.'

Unable to guide Congress, Gandhi planned to build a new vehicle which would push the Government and, in an emergency, carry the Government's load. It would be in politics without seeking political power except as a last resort. Instead of trying to win votes it would teach the masses 'to use their votes intelligently', Gandhi said.

'Under adult suffrage,' he declared, 'if we are worth our salt, we should have such a hold on the people that whomsoever we choose would be returned.' To assist in this task Gandhi wanted to attract more intellectuals. 'Our intelligentsia,' he told the conference of Constructive Workers, 'are not lacking in sympathy. Reason, as a rule, follows in the footsteps of feeling. We have not sufficiently penetrated their hearts to convince their reason.' That is a key to Gandhi: heart and mind were one, but heart ruled.

Why could not the constructive welfare work be done by the Congress party or by the Government? a delegate asked.

'Because Congressmen aren't sufficiently interested in constructive work,' Gandhi replied simply. 'We must recognize the fact that the social order of our dreams cannot come through the Congress party of today....

'There is so much corruption today,' Gandhi asserted, 'that it frightens me. Everybody wants to carry so many votes in his pocket, because votes give power.' (Kripalani described the trouble as 'red-tapism, jobbery, corruption, bribery, black-marketing and profiteering'.) Therefore, Gandhi emphasized, 'banish the idea of the capture of power and you will be able to guide power and keep it on the right path . . . There is no other way of removing the corruption that threatens to strangle our independence at its very birth'.

He who is immune to the temptation of power can best oppose the men in power, Gandhi felt. His limited experience told him that legislators and judges were too close to the machinery of power to check-and-balance the executive; only those outside government, he contended, could check-and-balance those in government.

Yet even his own high authority was no match for the power of a government born of his efforts and whose members touched his feet in obeisance.

CHAPTER XX

THE LAST FAST

RICHARD SYMONDS, a British friend who had met Gandhi in Bengal while doing relief work there, fell ill with typhoid in New Delhi in November 1947. Gandhi invited the patient to Birla House.

Once the doctor advised brandy for the sick man. The house was searched and a bottle of brandy found; on being asked, Gandhi, a strict prohibitionist, said he had no objection to it being given to Symonds. He took the same attitude subsequently when sherry was recommended to Symonds.

On the approach of Christmas, Gandhi asked a group of Indian Christian girls to decorate Symonds's room with holly and gay festoons; on Christmas Eve, at the Mahatma's suggestion, the girls came and sang carols.

Gandhi spent at least a few minutes and often much longer, with the patient each day. His only interference in the cure was to urge the application of mud packs to the abdomen. For the rest, his chief contribution to the restoration of the Englishman's health was to make him laugh whenever he was with him.

Symonds had been to Kashmir and wanted to discuss the situation with Gandhi, but except on the Mahatma's day of silence he never got a chance, for Gandhi entertained Symonds with funny stories and jokes from the moment he came into the room till the moment he left. The Kashmir problem was too grave for a patient.

Kashmir, including the beautiful Vale of Kashmir, is at the top of the world, in northernmost India. Its Hindu maharaja had ruled his 800,000 Hindu subjects and 3,200,000 Moslem subjects with equal disregard of their welfare and freedom. In September 1947 the Pakistan government abetted incursions into Kashmir by the wild warriors of the tribal area between the North-west Frontier and Afghanistan; subsequently Pakistan regular troops invaded Kashmir. Alarmed and helpless, the maharaja asked that his state be admitted into the Indian Union. On October 29th the accession was officially announced, and the maharaja thereupon appointed as his prime minister Sheik Abdulla, a Moslem, whom he had held in prison for protracted periods. Simultaneously, the New Delhi authorities rushed troops to Kashmir by air and road. Without the airlift, Kashmir would have been overrun and annexed by Pakistan. Soon Kashmir and neighbouring Jammu, likewise the realm of the maharaja, became the scene of a

small war between India and Pakistan which seriously drained the financial resources, patience and military establishments of both Dominions. Moslems called it 'Holy War'.

In a Christmas Day broadcast, Gandhi approved of India's action in sending troops to Kashmir to repel the tribal invaders. He condemned suggestions to partition the State between India and Pakistan. He regretted the fact that Nehru had submitted the dispute to the United Nations. At the U.N., he told Horace Alexander, the British pacifist, considerations of international 'power politics' rather than merit would determine the attitude of countries towards the Kashmir issue. Gandhi therefore urged India and Pakistan to 'come to an amicable settlement with the assistance of impartial Indians'; that, he said, would 'enable the Indian Union's representation to the U.N. to be withdrawn with dignity'. If direct negotiations failed, Gandhi contemplated mediation by one or two Englishmen; in his talk with Horace Alexander, the Mahatma mentioned Philip Noel-Baker, a member of the British Labour government, as an acceptable mediator. He also envisaged the possibility of a plebiscite or referendum among the inhabitants of the disputed region.

The Indian government, however, rejected mediation and arbitration; bitter U.N. debates continued interminably while tempers and military expenditures rose.

Gandhi always combined high politics with low politics. He talked Kashmir with Nehru one day, and the next day he went to a village and told the peasants how to mix 'the excreta of animals and human beings' with rubbish to make 'valuable manure'. They must improve their cattle, he advised further. Hindus complained that Moslems killed cows, Gandhi said, but Hindus killed cows 'by inches through ill treatment'. The villagers' address to him had

lauded the virtues of non-violence. 'But I know how such an address is prepared,' he stated in his reply. 'Someone writes it out and someone else reads it parrotwise and that is the end of it.' Did they practise non-violence? 'There must be consistency between one's thoughts, words and actions.'

By this touchstone, Gandhi was great; greater in fact after India became independent than before. On the eve of his departure from India after several months' sojourn, the Reverend Dr. John Haynes Holmes, of the Community Church in New York, wrote to Gandhi saying, 'I count these last months to be the crown and climax of your unparalleled career. You were never so great as in these dark hours.' Dr. Holmes had talked with Gandhi and knew his mood. 'Of course,' he wrote to the Mahatma, 'you have been sad, well-nigh overborne, by the tragedies of recent months, but you must never feel that this involves any breakdown of your life work.'

Gandhi printed the praise in *Harijan* of January 11th, 1948, under the caption: 'Is it Deserved?' His answer was, 'I wonder if the claim can be proved.' In the same issue of the paper, Gandhi printed another letter, from a European friend, who had written to comfort him. 'I for one, and I am sure I speak the heart of untold millions,' the friend declared, 'feel it my bounden duty to express my deepest gratitude to you for giving the whole of your life to what you felt to be the one way to salvation for mankind', non-violence.

'I must not flatter myself with the belief, nor allow friends like you to entertain the belief,' Gandhi replied, 'that I have exhibited any heroic and demonstrable non-violence in myself. All I can claim is that I am sailing in that direction without a moment's stop. . . .'

Gandhi's views on these matters were sober and modest.

But he was too involved emotionally in his life work to be objective about it. He could not see himself in historic perspective. He was too disappointed by the failure of others to judge his own success correctly.

Would it be right to judge Christ by his crucifiers and detractors?

Gandhi was too great to succeed. His goals were too high, his followers too human and frail.

Gandhi did not belong to India alone. His failures in India in no wise detract from his message and meaning to the world. He may be very dead in India and very alive outside India. Ultimately he may live there and here.

It is the manner of Gandhi's life that matters, not his immediate effect on his immediate neighbours.

Jesus may have thought that God had forsaken Him and Gandhi may have thought his people had forsaken him. The verdict of history cannot be anticipated by those who make it.

The stature of a man is in the eye of the beholder. Harassed, unhappy, thwarted by those who adored him, Gandhi could not have seen what heights he attained in the last months of his life. In that period he did something of endless value of any society: he gave India a concrete, living demonstration of a different and better life. He showed that men could live as brothers and that brute man with blood on his hands can respond, however briefly, to the touch of the spirit. Without such moments humanity would lose faith in itself. For ever after, the community must compare that flash of light with the darkness of normal existence.

The fact that Gandhi's fast restored Calcutta to its senses and peace, the fact that his presence reduced the mass killings in Delhi to occasional outbursts, the fact that his fleeting visit to Dr. Zakir Hussain's Okla academy gave it

immunity to violence, the fact that hardened bandits laid their arms at his feet, the fact that Hindus would listen to *Koran* verses and that Moslems would not object to hearing the holy words of Islam from the mouth of a Hindu — all this remains to inspire or haunt those whose actions would suggest that they have forgotten it. It is the seed of conscience and the source of hope.

On January 13th, 1948, Mahatma Gandhi commenced his last fast. It engraved an image of goodness on India's brain.

The killings in Delhi had ceased. Gandhi's presence in the city had produced its effect. But he was still in 'agony'. 'It is intolerable to me,' he said, 'that a person like Dr. Zakir Hussain, for instance, or for that matter Shaheed Suhrawardy [the ex-prime minister of Bengal] should not be able to move about in Delhi as freely and with as much safety as I myself.' Gandhi wanted to go to Pakistan to help the Hindus and Sikhs there, but how could he when the Moslems of Delhi had not obtained full redress? 'I felt helpless,' he said. 'I have never put up with helplessness in all my life.'

He therefore fasted; it was an 'all-in fast', to death. 'It came to me in a flash.' He had not consulted Nehru or Patel or his doctors. To the charge that he had acted impatiently when the situation was improving, he replied that he had waited patiently since the riots started a year ago; the spirit of inter-religious killing was still abroad in the land. 'It was only when in terms of human effort I had exhausted all resources . . . that I put my head on God's lap . . . God sent me the fast . . . Let our sole prayer be that God may vouchsafe me strength of spirit during the fast that the temptation to live may not lead me into a hasty or premature termination of the fast.'

The fast, Gandhi declared on the first day, was directed

to 'the conscience of all', to the Hindus and Moslems in the Indian Union and to the Moslems of Pakistan. 'If all or any one of the groups respond fully, I know the miracle will be achieved. For instance, if the Sikhs respond to my appeal as one man I shall be wholly satisfied.' He would go and live among the Sikhs of the Punjab.

'We are steadily losing hold on Delhi,' Gandhi asserted; he feared a recrudescence of violence in the capital, and 'if Delhi goes, India goes and with that the last hope of world peace'. Hindus had been murdered in Karachi, the capital of Pakistan, and elsewhere in the Moslem Dominion. With his fingertips, the Mahatma sensed the danger of a new wave of riots. In Delhi refugees were ejecting Moslems from their homes, and demands had been heard to banish all the Moslem inhabitants of the city. 'There is storm within the breast,' Gandhi said; 'it may burst forth any day.'

He had brooded over the situation for three days without telling anybody. When at last he decided to fast 'it made me happy'. He felt happy for the first time in months.

He knew he might die, 'but death for me would be a glorious deliverance rather than that I should be a helpless witness to the destruction of India, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam'. His friends, he announced, must not rush to Birla House to try to dissuade him. Nor must they be anxious. 'I am in God's hands.' Instead of worrying about him they should 'turn the searchlight inward; this is essentially a testing time for all of us'.

The first day of the fast he walked to the evening prayer meeting and conducted the services as usual. 'A fast weakens nobody during the first twenty-four hours after a meal,' he told the congregation with a smile. A written question passed to him on the platform asked who was to blame for the fast. No one, he replied, 'but if the Hindus

and Sikhs insist on turning out the Moslems of Delhi they will betray India and their religions; and it hurts me'. Some taunted him, he said, with fasting for the sake of the Moslems. They were right. 'All my life I have stood, as everyone should stand, for minorities and those in need. . . .

'I expect a thorough cleansing of hearts,' he declared. It did not matter what the Moslems in Pakistan were doing. Hindus and Sikhs should remember Tagore's favourite song: 'If no one responds to your call, Walk alone, Walk alone.'

He would break his fast when Delhi became peaceful 'in the real sense of the term.'

The second day of the fast the doctors told Gandhi not to go to prayers, so he dictated a message to be read to the congregation. But then he decided to attend and addressed the worshippers after the hymns and holy scriptures had been chanted. He had been deluged with messages, he said. The most pleasant was from Mrdulla Sarabhai in Lahore, Pakistan. She wired that his Moslem friends, including some in the Moslem League and Pakistan government were anxious for his safety and asked what they should do.

His answer was : 'The fast is a process of self-purification and is intended to invite all who are in sympathy with the mission of the fast to take part in the process of self-purification . . . Supposing there is a wave of self-purification throughout both parts of India. Pakistan will become *pak,* pure . . . Such a Pakistan can never die. Then, and only then, shall I repent that I ever called partition a sin, as I am afraid I must hold today. . . .'

As a child, he revealed, after listening to his father's discussions with friends of other communities, he had dreamed of real amity between religions. 'In the evening of my life, I shall jump like a child to feel that the dream

has been fulfilled.' Then his wish to live 125 years would be revived.

'I have not the slightest desire that the fast should be ended as soon as possible,' he assured the congregation. 'It matters little if the ecstatic wishes of a fool like me are never realized and the fast is never broken. I am content to wait as long as it may be necessary, but it will hurt me to think that people have acted merely to save my life.'

In this fast Gandhi did not wish to be examined by the physicians. 'I have thrown myself on God,' he told them. But Dr. Gilder, the heart specialist of Bombay, said the doctors wished to issue daily bulletins and could not tell the truth unless they examined him. That convinced the Mahatma and he relented. Dr. Sushila Nayyar told him there were acetone bodies in his urine.

'That is because I haven't enough faith,' Gandhi said.

'But this is a chemical,' she protested.

He looked at her with a faraway look and said, 'How little science knows. There is more in life than science and there is more in God than in chemistry.'

He could not drink water; it caused nausea. He refused to add some drops of citrus juice or honey to the water to prevent nausea. The kidneys were functioning poorly. He had lost much strength; his weight dropped two pounds each day.

The third day he submitted to a high colonic irrigation. At 2-30 in the morning he awoke and asked for a hot bath. In the tub he dictated a statement to Pyarelal asking the Indian Union government to pay the government of Pakistan 550,000,000 rupees, or approximately £40,000,000. This was Pakistan's share in the assets of pre-partition India; the New Delhi authorities had delayed payment, and Gandhi was demanding immediate transfer of the money. Having dictated the memorandum, he felt giddy and

Pyarelal lifted him out of the water and sat him in a chair. The Mahatma's weight was down to 107 pounds, his blood pressure 140.98.

The Indian Union government paid out the money.

That day, Gandhi occupied a cot which stood in an enclosed porch at the side of Birla House. Most of the time he lay in a crouched position, like an embryo, with his knees pulled up towards his stomach and his fists under his chest. The body and head were completely covered with a white khadi cloth which framed the face. His eyes were closed and he appeared to be asleep or half conscious. An endless queue filed past at a distance of ten feet. Indians and foreigners in the line were moved to pity as they observed him; many wept and murmured a prayer and touched their palms together in a greeting which he did not see. Acute pain was written on his face. Yet even in sleep or semi-consciousness, the suffering seemed to be sublimated; it was suffering dulled by the exhilaration of faith, suffering moderated by an awareness of service. His inner being knew that he was making a contribution to peace and he was therefore at peace with himself.

Before prayers at 5 p.m. he was fully awake but he could not walk to the prayer ground and arrangements were made for him to speak from his bed into a microphone connected with a loud-speaker at the prayer ground and with the All-India Radio which would broadcast his remarks throughout the country.

'Do not bother about what others are doing,' he said in a weak voice. 'Each of us should turn the searchlight inward and purify his or her heart as much as possible. I am convinced that if you purify yourselves sufficiently you will help India and shorten the period of my fast . . . You should think how best to improve yourselves and work for the good of the country . . . No one can escape death.

Then why be afraid of it? In fact, death is a friend who brings deliverance from suffering.'

He could speak no further. The rest of his message was read for him. Journalists had submitted questions to him and he was answering them orally.

'Why have you undertaken a fast when there was no disturbance of any kind in any part of the Indian Dominion?'

'What was it if not a disturbing disturbance', he replied, 'for a crowd to make an organized and a determined effort to take forcible possession of Moslem houses? The disturbance was such that the police had reluctantly to resort to tear gas and even a little shooting, if only overhead, before the crowd dispersed. It would have been foolish for me to wait till the last Moslem had been turned out of Delhi by subtle, undemonstrative methods which I would describe as killing by inches.'

The charge had been made that he was fasting against Vallabhbhai Patel, the assistant Prime Minister and Home Minister, whom some regarded as anti-Moslem. Gandhi denied it and said this seemed like an attempt to create a gulf between him and Nehru on the one hand and Patel on the other.

The fourth day, Gandhi's pulse was irregular. He allowed the doctors to take an electro-cardiogram and give him another irrigation. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad pleaded in vain with the Mahatma to drink some water with citrus juice. Gandhi had been drinking no water and passing no urine. The physicians warned him that even if he survived the fast he would suffer permanent, serious injury. Unheeding, he spoke to the prayer meeting by microphone from his cot and boasted that his voice was stronger than the day before. 'I have never felt so well on the fourth day of a fast,' he stated. 'My sole guide, even dictator, is God, the Infallible and Omnipotent. If he has any further use

for this frail body of mine He will keep it in spite of the prognostications of medical men and women. I am in His hands. Therefore I hope you will believe me when I say that I dread neither death nor permanent injury even if I survive. But I do feel that this warning of medical friends should, if the country has any use for me, hurry the people up to close their ranks.'

He insisted on addressing the prayer meeting by microphone for two minutes. This was followed by the reading of a statement which he had dictated earlier. The government of the Indian Union was paying Pakistan 550,000,000 rupees. This, Gandhi hoped, would lead to an honourable settlement of the Kashmir question and all outstanding differences between the two Dominions. 'Friendship should replace the present enmity . . . What will be Pakistan's counter gesture?'

On January 17th, Gandhi's weight was stabilized at 107 pounds. He was accumulating water apparently from the irrigations. He suffered from nausea and was restless. But for hours he rested quietly or slept. Nehru came and cried. Gandhi sent Pyarelal into the city to ascertain whether it was safe for Moslems to return. Hundreds of telegrams arrived from princes, from Moslems in Pakistan, from every corner of India. Gandhi felt gratified, but his written statement that day was a warning : 'Neither the Rajas nor Maharajas nor the Hindus or Sikhs or any others will serve themselves or India as a whole if at this, what is to me sacred juncture they mislead me with a view to terminating my fast. They should know that I never feel so happy as when I am fasting for the spirit. This fast has brought me higher happiness than hitherto. No one need disturb this happy state unless he can honestly claim that in his journey he has turned deliberately from Satan towards God.'

On January 18th, Gandhi felt better. He permitted some light massage. His weight remained at 107 pounds.

Ever since 11 a.m. on the 13th when Gandhi commenced to fast, committees representing numerous communities, organizations and refugee groups in Delhi had been meeting in the house of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the new Congress president, in an effort to establish real peace among divergent elements. It was not a matter of obtaining signatures to a document. That would not satisfy Gandhi. They must make concrete pledges which they knew their followers would carry out. If the pledges were broken Gandhi could easily and quickly ascertain the fact and then he would fast irrevocably to death. Conscious of the responsibility, some representatives hesitated and went away to consult their conscience and subordinates.

At last, on the morning of the 18th, the pledge was drafted and signed and over a hundred delegates repaired from Prasad's home to Birla House. Nehru and Azad were already there. The Chief of Police of Delhi and his deputy were also present; they too had signed the pledge. Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, Christians and Jews attended. The Hindu Mahasabha and the R.S.S. were represented.

Jarab Zahid Hussain-Saheb, the High Commissioner (Ambassador) of Pakistan in Delhi, was also present.

Prasad opened the conference with the fasting Mahatma by explaining that their pledge included a promise and programme for implementation. The undertakings were definite. 'We take the pledge that we shall protect the life, property and faith of the Moslems and that the incidents which have taken place in Delhi will not happen again.'

Gandhi listened and nodded.

'We want to assure Gandhiji,' Point Two, 'that the annual fair at Kwaja Qutab-ud-Din Mazar will be held

this year as in previous years.' This was a reference to a fair held regularly at a Moslem shrine outside the city.

The specific nature of this promise seemed to brighten Gandhi's face.

'Moslems will be able to move about in Subzimandi, Karol Bagh, Paharganj and other localities just as they could in the past.

'The mosques which have been left by Moslems and which are now in the possession of Hindus and Sikhs will be returned. The areas which have been set apart for Moslems will not be forcibly occupied.'

Moslems who had fled could return and conduct their business as before.

'These things,' they assured him, 'will be done by our personal efforts and not with the help of the police or military.'

Prasad accordingly begged the Mahatma to discontinue the fast.

A Hindu representative then reported to Gandhi on the touching scenes of fraternization that had taken place that morning when a procession of 150 Moslem residents of Subzimandi was given an ovation and then feted by the Hindus of the locality.

Gandhi had been kept informed of the deliberations in Rajendra Prasad's house; he had originally formulated several of the points which the delegates were presenting to him as adopted.

Gandhi now addressed the group before him. He was moved, he said, by their words. But 'your guarantee is nothing worth and I will feel and you will one day realize that it was a great blunder for me to give up the fast if you hold yourself responsible for the communal peace of Delhi only.' The press had reported inter-religious

troubles in Allahabad. Representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha and R.S.S., Gandhi continued, were in the room and had signed the pledge for Delhi. 'If they are sincere about their professions surely they cannot be indifferent to outbreaks of madness in places other than Delhi.' This was a clear implication of the guilt of these two organizations. 'Delhi,' Gandhi continued, 'is the heart of the Indian Dominion and you are the cream of Delhi. If you cannot make the whole of India realize that the Hindus, Sikhs and Moslems are all brothers, it will bode ill for the future of both Dominions. What will happen to India if they both quarrel ?'

Here Gandhi, overcome with emotion, broke down; tears streamed down his hollow cheeks. Onlookers sobbed; many wept.

When he resumed his voice was too weak to be heard and Dr. Sushila Nayyar repeated aloud what he whispered to her. Were they deceiving him, Gandhi asked. Were they merely trying to save his life? Would they guarantee peace in Delhi and release him so he could go to Pakistan and plead for peace there? Did Moslems regard Hindus as infidels who worshipped idols and who should therefore be exterminated?

Maulana Azad and other Moslem scholars spoke and assured Gandhi that this was not the Islamic attitude. Genesh Dutt, speaking for the R. S. S. and the Hindu Mahasabha, pleaded with Gandhi to break his fast. The Pakistan Ambassador also addressed a few friendly words to the Mahatma. A Sikh representative added his pledge.

Gandhi sat on the cot, silent and sunk in thought. The assembly waited. Finally he announced that he would break the fast. Parsi, Moslem and Japanese scriptures were read and then the Hindu verse:

Lead me from untruth to truth,
From darkness to light,
From death to immortality.

The girls of Gandhi's entourage sang a Hindu song and 'When I survey the Wondrous Cross', Gandhi's favourite Christian hymn.

Thereupon, Maulana Azad handed Gandhi a glass filled with eight ounces of orange juice which Gandhi slowly drank.

If the pledge was kept, Gandhi said, it would revive his wish to live his full span of life and serve humanity. 'That span, according to learned opinion,' he declared, 'is at least 125 years, some say 133.'

The same afternoon, Gandhi had a talk with Arthur Moore former editor of the British-owned daily *Statesman*. 'He was lightsome and gay,' Moore wrote, 'and his interest while he talked with me was not in himself but in me, whom he plied with probing questions.'

When he awoke that morning, Nehru had decided to fast until evening in sympathy with Gandhi. Then the Prime Minister was summoned to Birla House where he witnessed the giving of the pledge and the breaking of the fast. 'See here,' Nehru said to Gandhi in mock censure, 'I have been fasting; and now this will force me to break my fast prematurely.'

Gandhi was pleased. In the afternoon he sent some documents to Nehru with a note saying he hoped he had ended his fast. 'May you long remain the jewel of India,' Gandhi added. *Jawahar* is 'jewel' in Hindustani.

Gandhi told his evening prayer meeting that he interpreted the pledge as meaning, 'Come what may, there will be complete friendship between the Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, Christians and Jews, a friendship not to be broken.'

Sir Mohamed Zafrullah Khan, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, informed the U.N. Security Council at Lake Success that 'a new and tremendous wave of feeling and desire for friendship between the two Dominions is sweeping the subcontinent in response to the fast'.

The national boundary between Pakistan and the Indian Union is an unhealed cut through the heart of India and friendship is difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, Gandhi's last fast did perform the miracle not merely of pacifying Delhi but of putting an end to religious riots and violence throughout both Dominions.

That partial solution of a problem which is world wide stands as a monument to the moral force of one man whose desire to serve was greater than his attachment to life. Gandhi loved life and wanted to live. But through the readiness to die he recovered the capacity to serve, and therein lay happiness. In the twelve days that followed the fast he was happy and jolly; despondency had fled and he was full of plans for further work. He courted death and found a new lease on life.

CHAPTER XXI

THE LAST ACT

THE first day after the fast Gandhi was carried to prayers in a chair. In his speech, which was only faintly audible, he reported that an official of the Hindu Mahasabha, which believed in Hindu supremacy and was the parent of the militant anti-Moslem R.S.S., had repudiated the Delhi peace pledge. Gandhi said he was sorry.

The second day he again had to be carried to prayers. In the course of his usual remarks, he declared he hoped

to recuperate rapidly and then go to Pakistan to pursue the mission of peace.

At question time, a man urged Gandhi to proclaim himself a reincarnation of God. 'Sit down and be quiet,' Gandhi replied with a tired smile.

While Gandhi was speaking, the noise of an explosion was heard. 'What is it?' he asked. 'I don't know.' The audience was agitated. 'Don't worry about it,' he said. 'Listen to me.'

A hand-made bomb had been thrown at the Mahatma from the nearby garden wall.

The next day Gandhi, having walked to the prayer meeting, told the worshippers that congratulations had poured in on him for remaining unruffled during the incident. He said he deserved no praise; he had thought it was military practice. 'I would deserve praise,' he asserted, 'only if I fell as a result of such an explosion and yet retained a smile on my face and no malice against the doer. No one should look down on the misguided youth who had thrown the bomb. He probably looks upon me as an enemy of Hinduism.'

The young man, Gandhi continued, should realize that 'those who differ with him are not necessarily evil'. He urged the supporters of such young people to desist from their activity. 'This is not the way to save Hinduism. Hinduism can only be saved by my method.'

Sikhs visited Gandhi and assured him that the would-be assailant was not a Sikh. 'What does it matter,' Gandhi asked, 'whether be was a Sikh or a Hindu or a Moslem? I wish all perpetrators well.'

An illiterate old woman had grappled with the grenade-thrower and held him till the police came. Gandhi commended 'the unlettered sister on her simple bravery'. He told the Inspector General of Police not to molest the

young man. Instead, they should try to convert him to right thinking and right doing. Nor should the worshippers be angry with the 'miscreant'. 'You should pity him,' Gandhi said.

The young man's name was Madan Lal. He was a refugee from the Punjab, had found shelter in a mosque in Delhi and been evicted when the police, under pressure of Gandhi's wishes, commenced clearing Moslem places of worship.

'I had seen with my own eyes horrible things in Pakistan,' Madan Lal testified at his trial. 'I had also been an eye-witness to the shooting down of Hindus in Punjab towns and in Delhi by troops from the south.'

Aroused, Madan Lal had joined a group of men who were plotting to kill Gandhi. When the grenade failed to reach its target and Madan Lal was arrested, his fellow conspirator, Nathuram Vinayak Godse, came to Delhi. Godse, age thirty-five, was the editor and publisher of a Hindu Mahasabha weekly in Poona, in Tilak's Maratha country, and he was a high-degree, Chitpawan Brahman.

Subsequently, Godse, Madan Lal and seven others were tried together. The trial lasted more than six months. Among other things, Madan Lal said he was angered by the Indian Union's payment of 550,000,000 rupees to Pakistan. This exasperated Godse.

'I sat brooding intensely on the atrocities perpetrated on Hinduism and its dark and deadly future if left to face Islam outside and Gandhi inside,' Godse testified, 'and . . . I decided all of a sudden to take the extreme step against Gandhi.'

The success of Gandhi's last fast especially infuriated Godse. He resented the Mahatma's insistence that refugees be evacuated from the mosques. He was bitter because no demands were made on the Moslems.

Godse began hovering around Birla House. He wore a khaki jacket. In a pocket of the jacket he kept a small pistol.

Gandhi's prayer meeting on Sunday, January 25th, 1948, had an unusually heavy attendance. Gandhi was pleased. He told the people that they should bring straw mats or thick khadi to sit on because the ground in winter was cold and damp. It gladdened his heart, he continued, to be told by Hindu and Moslem friends that Delhi had experienced 'a reunion of hearts'. In view of this improvement, could not every Hindu and Sikh who came to prayers bring along 'at least one Moslem ?' To Gandhi this would be concrete evidence of brotherhood.

But Hindus like Madan Lal and Godse and their ideological sponsors were incensed by the presence of Moslems at Hindu services and the reading of selections from the *Koran*. Moreover, they seemed to hope that the death of Gandhi might be the first step towards the violent reunification of India. They wished, by removing him, to make the Moslems defenceless, little realizing that his assassination would have the opposite effect by showing the country how dangerous and undisciplined extreme anti-Moslems could be.

Despite the relaxation that followed his fast, Gandhi knew the great difficulties facing the new, inexperienced Government. He had lost confidence in the ability of Congress. Much, very much, now depended on the two top government leaders: Prime Minister Nehru and Deputy Prime Minister Patel. They did not always see eye to eye. They were temperamental opposites. There had been friction between them. It worried Gandhi. Indeed, things had come to such a pass that Gandhi wondered whether Nehru and Patel could work together in the Government. Forced to make a choice, the Mahatma

might have preferred Nehru. He appreciated Patel as an old friend and skilled administrator, but loved Nehru and was sure of his equal friendship for Hindus and Moslems. Patel had been suspected of political pro-Hinduism.

In the end, Gandhi decided that Nehru and Patel were indispensable to one another. The Government would be seriously weakened if it lost either. Gandhi accordingly wrote Nehru a note in English saying he and Patel 'must hold together' for the good of the country. At 4 p.m. on January 30th, Patel came to see Gandhi in Birla House to hear the same message.

At 5.05. Gandhi, troubled because he was late, left Patel and, leaning his arms on Abha and Manu, hurried to the prayer ground. Nathuram Godse was in the front row of the congregation, his hand in his pocket gripping the small pistol. He had no personal hatred of Gandhi, Godse said at his trial, at which he was sentenced to be hanged: 'Before I fired the shots I actually wished him well and bowed to him in reverence.'

In response to Godse's obeisance and the reverential bows of other members of the congregation, Gandhi touched his palms together, smiled and blessed them. At that moment, Godse pulled the trigger. Gandhi fell, and died murmuring, 'Oh, God.'

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan

CONSTITUENT INSTITUTIONS

---

1. MUMBADEVI SANSKRIT MAHAVIDYALAYA:

An Oriental College, teaching Sanskrit and the Shastras by traditional methods.

Departments

(a) Mumbadevi Sanskrit Pathashala, for specialized Shastric studies; (b) Devidas Lallubhai Pathashala, for preliminary Shastric and Sanskrit studies; (c) Nagardas Rughnathdas Jyotish Shikshapith for specialized study of Indian Astrology and Astronomy, and (d) Purushottam Thakkar Vedashala for Vedic studies.

Examinations conducted

For the Bhavan's diplomas (recognised by the Government of Bombay) of Shastri, Acharya and Vachaspati in Sahitya, Vyakarana, Vedanta, Jyotish.

Facilities

Free tuition to all and free boarding and lodging or scholarships to all deserving students.

2. GITA VIDYALAYA:

An Academy for the study of Indian Culture with special reference to the *Bhagavad Gita.* Classes conducted at the Bhavan and 19 centres. Examinations for the Gita Vid and Gita Visharad Diplomas are conducted and scholarships, medals and prizes are given to successful candidates.

3. MUNGALAL GOENKA SAMSHODHAN MANDIR:

A Post-graduate & Research Institute recognised by the University of Bombay for research for Ph.D. & M.A.

Departments

(a) Sanskrit Shikshapith; (b) Singhi Jain Sahitya Shikshapith; (c) Narmad Gujarati Shikshapith; (d) Bhagavad Dharma Shikshapith and (e) Bharatiya Itihasa Vibhag.

Facilities

Scholarships and free guidance to deserving scholars.

4. MUNSHI SARASVATI MANDIR (An Institute of Culture):

Departments

(a) *Library* with about 40,000 printed volumes, including rare indological volumes and a Children's section; (b) *Museum* consisting of ancient and valuable manuscripts, paintings, bronzes, etc.; (c) *All-India Cultural Essay Competition*; (d) *Bharatiya Sangit Shikshapith* —An Academy of Music for teaching and conducting research in Music—affiliated to the National Academy of Hindustani Music, Lucknow, teaching for Intermediate and Graduate courses; (e) *Bharatiya Kala Kendra*—An Academy of Arts and Dramatics, including a School of Dancing.

5. PRAKASHAN MANDIR

(a) This department publishes the results of the research work of the Bhavan, the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad and the Munshi Sahitya. (b) *The Book University*—Under this scheme, books—ancient and modern—are published in a uniform size and at a low price with a view to make the best literature and classics of India and the world available to the common man in easily understandable form.

6. M. M. COLLEGE OF ARTS & N. M. INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE:

This College of the Bhavan is affiliated to the University of Bombay for courses leading to B.A., B.Sc., M.A., M.Sc., and Ph.D. The College has a Gita Academy also.

7. ACADEMY OF PRINTING:

As a first step towards establishing an Academy of Printing, Bhavan has acquired the majority of shares in Messrs. Associated Advertisers & Printers Ltd.—one of the biggest presses in Bombay.

8. BHARATIYA VIDYA GROUP:

Under the auspices of this group, lectures by eminent men on politics, economics, sociology etc., are regularly held.

Affiliated Institutions

(1) The Gujarati Sahitya Parishad; (2) Shri Sahitya Sansad; (3) The Bombay Astrological Society; (4) The Bharatiya Stri Seva Sangh.

THE AUTHOR

LOUIS FISCHER was born in 1896 in Philadelphia. He taught school several years before he became a journalist. In 1921 he was sent to Berlin by the "New York Post" and spent most of the next twenty-five years on roving assignments in Europe and Asia.

He is one of the outstanding authorities on Russia, where he spent many years, and on India and the Middle East. After covering the Spanish Civil War, he was in France when World War II broke out and he spent the first few months of the conflict practically commuting between London and Paris. [illegible] the war he has travelled throughout the world.

Louis Fischer has written: "Empire", "Dawn of Victory", "A Week with Gandhi", "The Soviets in World Affairs", "Men and Politics", "The Great Challenge", "Gandhi and Stalin", "The Life of Mahatma Gandhi" etc.

954